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The role of occupational safety and health management in enhancing employee productivity in SMEs

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Abstract

The human resources are considered the main engine for driving development in SMEs. Despite the importance of these resources, they are exposed to many risks, including those during performing their tasks. that occupational health and safety management is one of the most important administrative systems that economic institutions should give them the required attention due to their importance in providing a suitable work environment for workers and protecting them from any injuries in the workplace. Based on that, the current research aims to investigate the role of occupational safety and health management in enhancing employee productivity in industrial institution.

The current research used the qualitative approach in collecting study data and answering the basic research question. Although the previous studies confirmed that SMEs suffer from weak implementation of occupational health and safety measures, these studies emphasized the importance of occupational health and safety management in enhancing the productivity of employees and motivating them to work in a safe and suitable environment

Keywords: *occupational safety and health management, employee productivity, SME*

1. Introduction

Small and medium-sized enterprises are the main supporters of the growth and development of any country, whether developed or developing. This has led many countries to support and develop the SME sector through a range of programs and means that aimed to establish as many SMEs as possible. Despite all that SMEs face various problems including marketing, technology, competition and lack of specialized human competencies (Katsuro et al., 2010).

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are like other enterprises in terms of production factors. The human resources are considered the main engine for driving development in these enterprises (Kheni et al., 2010). Despite the importance of these resources, they are exposed to many risks, including those during performing their tasks.

This costs the institution and holds it a big responsibility, especially for small and medium enterprises because of their specificity and high dependence on human resources. Njihia et al. (2017) argued that if the worker exposed to risks, it will be difficult to compensate him, especially if he was qualified and trained in his field.

Organizations of all sizes seek to preserve their human resources in particular, as these resources are the main pillar of companies, and the application of occupational health and safety management contributes to reduce work accidents, protect them from work-related diseases, provides employees with the suitable environment to work and enhance their level of motivation towards work (Katsuro et al., 2010). In this regard, Surienty (2019) stressed that these systems are of great importance in preserving the employees' life within the institution and providing them with a healthy and safe environment. Accordingly, there has been increased interest in occupational safety and health systems, where local and international conferences have been held and aimed to protect the workers and enhancing their productivity. Based on that, the current research aims to investigate the role of occupational safety and health management in enhancing employee productivity in industrial institution.

1.1 Research problem

The various countries of the world have witnessed many economic, social and political challenges. These challenges have affected the performance of institutions and stressed the need to provide a suitable environment for the human element that enables him to cope with these changes and deal with them.

Providing the right environment for human resources is one of the most important aspects that should be taken care of due to the large amount of risks that workers may be exposed to in the workplace, in addition to the provision of various elements that ensure the maintenance of employee productivity. The observer of occupational safety and health issues in institutions of various sizes can notice the large amount of violations that occur in the rules of occupational safety and health, and notes the absence of the application of occupational health and safety regulations (Adjotor, 2013). AbuHamra and Enshassi (2015) emphasized that neglecting the application of occupational health and safety regulations is a key factor in the occurrence of many working injuries.

It is therefore important to clarify the role of occupational safety and health management in enhancing employee productivity in industrial institution. Thus, the problem of the current research can be summarized in the following question: **what is the role of occupational safety and health management in enhancing employee productivity in industrial institution?**

1.2 Research importance

Attention to human safety through occupational safety and health systems occupies a large part of the concerns of industrial organizations of different types and sizes. The main reason for this is the desire of these institutions to maintain the safety of the human element from exposure to repeated work injuries. Surienty et al. (2011) pointed out that the human resource is one of the most important requirements for the success of organizations at the global level.

In addition, worker productivity is an important variable in business and production management. This variable has received considerable attention from researchers (Katsuro et al., 2010; Surienty et al., 2011; Surienty, 2019), and has gained particular importance for managers of industrial organizations who focus their concerns on ways in which they can be improved and developed within organizations. In this regard, the importance of study shows from the variables which the current research tries to investigate, which are the role of occupational safety and health management on the productivity of employees working in SMEs. The results of the current research will encourage organizations to provide a healthy working environment suitable for workers, thereby reducing waste in primary resources and injuries related to workers. Moreover, improving these aspects is expected to improve product quality, improve staff performance and increase productivity.

1.3 Research Methodology

The current research will be based on the qualitative approach in collecting study data and answering the basic research question. This approach is based on a review of previous studies of books, theses and articles related to the subject of research and presenting the results of previous studies.

2. Literature review

2.1 Occupational safety and health management

Any organization is currently seeking to meet the desired of the customer. This requires new technological resources and qualified human resources correspond with the changes in the environment and technology. Micheli and Cagno (2010) stated that this can be achieved by maintaining human competencies and providing them with the various conditions that enable them to perform their duties as intended. Micheli and Cagno (2010) pointed out that occupational health and safety management is one of the most important administrative systems that economic institutions should give them the required attention due to their importance in providing a suitable work environment for workers and protecting them from any injuries in the workplace.

The Occupational Safety and Health management is defined as the department which has the responsibilities and duties of management, guidance, planning, implementation and follow-up of all issues related to occupational safety and security in the institution or establishments (Balkissoon, 2016). The Occupational Safety and Health management also includes the development of technical rules and instructions to ensure the safety of workers, property and the environment, and the development of a strategy, whether in training programs or education and awareness.

All this can improve the level of employees' performance and the level of safety of professionals to reach quality standards in occupational safety (Micheli and Cagno, 2010).

Balkissoon (2016) clarified that the suitable management of the work environment avoids many of the problems of accidents and health diseases. These accidents cost the organization many material and moral costs, including compensation paid to employees or their families, as well as the disruption of work. Micheli and Cagno (2010) added that the management responsible for providing the right place and free from the risks leading to harm to employees during their work. Hussein (2009) emphasized that this responsibility is increasing in the light of technological development, particularly in the industrial organization. Floyde et al. (2013) explained that the occupational safety and health management includes providing the appropriate work system through the provision of preventive equipment and the use of regular records on any injuries, accidents and diseases.

Legg et al. (2015) pointed out the importance of occupational safety and health management, which contributes to reducing the psychological effects of accidents and industrial diseases. Hussein (2009) argued that accidents not only affect the physical aspects of work, but also affect the feelings of employees inside the organization as well as customers. This department also contributes to the strengthening of the human relationship between the administration and the employees.

Moreover, Zamanian and Mehrifar (2019) clarified that achieving occupational safety and health objectives entails implementing the tasks and responsibilities of the department. These responsibilities include promoting awareness of the sources of risks in the work environment, informing employees of the health and physical hazards that are likely to affect their health and safety.

Floyde et al. (2013) added that the management's responsibility is to encourage employees to follow the occupational safety and health programs and to hold training and educational courses for the staff working on the basis of occupational health and safety.

2.2 Employee productivity

The success of organizations depends on the effectiveness of individuals in performing their tasks and duties, which necessarily depends on the extent of enthusiasm towards the work. Employees are a key element of the organization, which emphasizes the need to be concerned about their productivity. Productivity is defined as the sum of the human effort used to achieve the goal (Micheli and Cagno, 2010). Some researchers consider productivity to be a term used to express the efficiency of work done by workers in the production of goods and services (Hussein, 2009).

Legg et al. (2015) stated that productivity is an indicator that reflects the level of efficiency of the organization in the use of human and non-human resources available to organizations. They are also evidence of the scientific and technical development of organizations.

Zamanian and Mehrifar (2019) demonstrate that the task of raising and developing workers' productivity falls directly on workers, technicians and administrators working in production units. Floyde et al. (2013) stated that effective management is concerned with accidents and their level of impact on employee productivity. Evans and Collier (2007) pointed out that there are many factors that affect the level of worker productivity, such as technical and human factors.

Bayars and Rue (2000) pointed out that the worst consequences that may result from work injuries are the negative psychological effects on the injured and their work colleagues. The injured worker will have a feeling of anxiety, fear and despair, and his colleagues become fearful and anxious. These feelings negatively affect employee productivity. Micheli and Cagno (2010) emphasized that the high productivity of workers is an indicator that reflects the economic strength of the organization compared to its competitors in the competitive market.

2.3 Small and medium enterprises (SMEs)

There are many definitions for SMEs, due to the lack of a precise definition agreed upon. Thud several criteria have been adopted in order to find a definition commensurate with the specificities of each country (Zamanian and Mehrifar, 2019). These criteria are classified into quantitative and qualitative criteria. Quantitative standards include labor volume and capital size in addition to other quantitative criteria such as capital factor, turnover, and production capacity (Surienty, 2012). Qualitative standards allow to demonstrate the advantages of this type of institutions, as well as understanding their nature and their difference with other organizations, such as independence, ownership, and limited market.

Small enterprises in developed countries are defined as enterprises with fewer than 10 employees and total assets of less than \$ 100,000. The medium institution is an organization with fewer than 300,000 employees and assets of less than \$ 15 million (Hussein, 2009).

Hedar (2012) clarified that SMEs have many advantages, including:

1. Ease of Establishment: SMEs derive the ease of their establishment from their need for relatively small capital, as they are mainly based on attracting and activating people's savings in order to achieve benefit.
2. Independence in management: Most of the administrative decisions of these institutions are concentrated in the personality of their owner. This facilitates the process of raising performance and achieving greater return
3. The speed of adaptation in facing the difficult economic conditions, which large projects may not be able to, therefore, small enterprises are more able to cope with difficult circumstances.
4. The speed of change, development and adaptation to the changes of modernization and growth, especially with regard to the desires and of consumers and the ability to satisfy their needs in their whereabouts.

2.4 The role of occupational safety and health management in enhancing employee productivity in SMEs

To enable enterprises to work towards achieving their interests, objectives and continuity, Diugwu (2011) pointed out that companies must establish occupational safety and health procedures and find suitable and risk-free working environments.

In addition to educating employees about safety rules to reduce the risks facing the work and achieve maximum safety and occupational health. Njihia et al. (2017) emphasized that compliance with occupational health and safety laws contributes to the reduction of material and human losses, thus helping to reduce costs, increase productivity and improve the efficiency of workers.

Abunawwas (2018) stated that providing a suitable environment for workers in industrial companies contributes to motivating employees to perform their duties to the fullest. Binti et al. (2016) clarified that workers who do not suffer from work stress and job dissatisfaction and who have the right conditions to work are able to do their jobs properly, and their response to occupational safety and health regulations is better. These workers are ready to provide their fullest abilities to maintain business continuity and the company they work for. Unlike employees who suffer from mental disorders and stress as a result of the lack of psychological, physical and spatial conditions that help them to work,

Several previous studies have found that the application of occupational health and safety systems positively affects employee performance. Njihia et al. (2017) founds that OSH creates a sense of comfort for employees in the workplace and therefore motivates employees to improve their performance. Njihia et al. (2017) argued that insecurity of staff meant that staff could not perform well and consequently decreased their productivity. Katsuro et al. (2010) concluded that the existence of problems related to occupational safety and health management gives employees a negative attitude towards the work environment and affect their productivity level negatively.

Adjotor (2013) found that the application of occupational safety and health management is considered a key factor affecting the productivity of the individual. The results indicated that the application of occupational safety and health regulations increases the level of effort exerted by employees, improves the quality of their work and increases their level of work concentration. All this is reflected positively on the level of staff productivity and hence the level of productivity of the organization.

Abunawwas (2018) concluded that the Occupational Safety and Health management affects the performance of employees. The results confirmed that successful management must be committed to training employees on the application of these systems because these systems have a positive and effective impact in raising the level of performance of employees and enhance their productivity.

At the level of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), Legg et al. (2015) confirmed that there is a dearth of studies that attempt to link the issue of occupational health and safety laws with employee performance. Most of these studies were applied to large, not small and medium-sized enterprises. Legg et al. (2015) concluded that OSH laws help SMEs to improve, support and make the work environment suitable for employees. Kheni et al. (2010) found that employee ignorance of occupational safety and health regulations is one of the most important obstacles to the effective implementation of these regulations in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

The study confirmed that the effective application of occupational health and safety management enhances the level of efficiency of workers and gives them comfort in the work environment, thus increasing the level of their motivation towards work and double the level of their productivity.

Mapetere and Sikomwe (2018) found that the occupational safety and health management is not committed to the application of occupational health and safety standards in SMEs and is not aware of the importance of these standards and how they relate to the economic costs incurred by the company. The results also indicated that SMEs should address safety and public health issues in order to enhance worker productivity through a healthy and safe working environment.

Surienty (2012) stressed on the necessity of the management commitment to the implementation of occupational safety and health systems due to the great importance of these laws in enhancing the safety and security of small and medium enterprises and providing a safe and healthy work environment that enables workers to provide their best and enhance their productivity.

Hussein (2009) found a significant correlation between the occupational health and safety management and the productivity of workers. This indicates the importance of OSH management in enhancing employee productivity

3. Research conclusion

Therefore, all institutions seek to increase their production and market share by optimizing the use of their resources. The most important resource for the institution is the human resource. The institutions works to provide all aspects that make the human factor feel comfortable in work and loyalty to the institution, and strive to raise the level of his performance. Implementing and respecting occupational safety and health regulations ensures that risks and various occupational diseases are minimized. Thus, increases the comfort level of employees and motivates them to do their best

Although the previous results confirmed that SMEs suffer from weak implementation of occupational health and safety measures, these studies emphasized the importance of occupational health and safety management in enhancing the productivity of employees and motivating them to work in a safe and suitable environment. Based on these finding the researcher recommends the following:

1. The need for SMEs to adopt an occupational health and safety management system
2. Develop the performance of the occupational health and safety management units in small and medium enterprises. These units can effectively address all the problems facing employees.
3. Holding training courses to raise the awareness of workers in SMEs of the importance of adhering to the application of occupational safety and health regulations.

4. Enhancing the efforts of researchers in studying occupational safety and health systems in small and medium enterprises.

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