



Leadership-Driven Safety Culture: A Key Determinant of Organizational Performance

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ABSTRACT

Leadership is very important in itself, provided it is used in an efficient way, keeping in mind the ability and safety of everyone. Creating an environment where safety is ingrained in every aspect is very crucial for any organisation. Safety culture refers to the comprehensive/extensive approach for managing safety at a workplace. It encloses the collective beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes of employees towards the well-being of workers and the overall safety of the work environment and plays a crucial role in maintaining a safe workplace. If handled with care, it can influence human performance in safety-related tasks, affecting the organisation's safety performance. According to the 2023 Key Work Health and Safety (WHS) Statistics, workplaces have witnessed more than 1,850 fatalities and 1,140,000 serious compensation claims over the past decade. Although there has been progress in enhancing workplace safety, the data indicates that further efforts are required. This article not only tries to analyse the culture of safety adopted by various organisations but also to study the factors responsible to make sure the implementation of effective health and safety management system. Once this system implemented in effective manner, may surely enhance the productivity of organisation as well as of the employees also.

1. INTRODUCTION

An essential part of a larger organizational culture is the safety culture found inside the company and an effective leadership style can be beneficial in managing it. Everyone who interacts with an organization initially expects that every effort is being made to provide a safe environment, one that is always working to minimize harm. There are moments when defining a safety culture is challenging. Nonetheless, a true commitment to safety by an organization is characterized by some fundamental components as well as resource investments. These include resources to support the work (people, technology, and programs), leadership commitment that reaches the front lines, and behavioural standards with accountability and measurement mechanisms that show how the business prioritizes safety work.

Safety Culture: Why Use It?

Implement a safety and health program is one of the best ways to safeguard our company's most valuable asset: the workforce. Even for a short period of time, losing employees due to disease or accident can have a big financial impact on the company, the affected employees, and their families. Additionally, it can harm reputation, productivity, turnover, and workplace morale. Therefore, programs for safety and health must be encourage as a pro-active approach to "finding and fixing" hazards at work before they can result in any disease or injury. Management and employees work together to identify and resolve problems before they arise, as opposed to responding to an incident. This kind of cooperation fosters communication, increases trust, and frequently results in other business improvements.

Compliance shouldn't be the only foundation for a safety culture. Since employees are the cornerstone of an organization, it is essential to create a work atmosphere where they feel comfortable and secure. The organization thrives when employees' health and well-being are given priority. The top management must cooperate in promoting a proactive attitude to safety, increasing collaboration, and fostering trust. Following are some tips that can be used for creating a Safety Culture:

- Make sure information obtained from routine inspections, employee feedback, and random safety observations is complete and correct by using digital checklists and templates from the Public Library.
- With sensors and geotagging, we may get a 360-degree view of all the activities and places within your company, enabling real-time incident reporting in the event that a problem arises.
- Use digital signatures or QR codes to efficiently track all reports and ensure that managers and other stakeholders can easily access them when needed.
- Implement preventative or corrective measures right away, and then monitor their completion.
- To enhance safety procedures, track and evaluate safety data, spot patterns, and make data-driven choices.
- Encourage cooperation by providing open channels of information, such as Heads Up alerts for crises, new regulations, or emergent difficulties.
- Provide a thorough training program to raise the level of safety awareness and skill among the workforce.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

Michael F. Gutzeit, Holly O'Brien & Jackie E. Valentine, in their article has focused on building, measuring, and maintaining a culture of patient safety. By focusing on a culture of safety, organizations will likely experience additional benefits related to employee/staff, patient/visitor, and environmental safety.

According to **Yorio et al.** the idea of safety culture was raised after the 1986 Chernobyl incident. As stated by **Fernandez & Gulden Mund**, there is no universally accepted definition for safety culture as several interpretations have been assigned to safety culture by many researchers since its inception. Regardless of this, certain elements make it possible to constitute a definition for safety culture as a set of shared values, and members' safety perception, attitude and their behavior concerning safety in an organization as well as organizational policies, procedures, and practices pertinent to the enhancement of measures against possible risks and hazards being the priority. **Cox and Cox** also highlighted the concept of safety culture by including collective beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes of the workforce in the pursuit of safety. The dimensions of safety culture will be applied to assist employees' stress and safety performance, such as management commitment, work environment, and involvement. According to **Wilkinson**, Management commitment increases employees' skills, which helps to save lives, reduce stress, and prevent injuries in any organization. Involvement or work demands on workers associated with limited management and work-life balance activities have been found to increase the rate of stress. Consequently, this paper clarifies the understanding and development of safety attitudes that would reduce accidents at the workplace

3. ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION:

Workplace risks are often avoided as the company may not be aware of them. Therefore, recognizing workplace safety concerns can reduce the possibility of near-misses, accidents, or incidents at work. Almost anything in the workplace has the potential to become dangerous under certain conditions. However, safe work practices and surroundings can increase security. Considering some major problems, OSHA has identified some safety risks at workplace:

1. **Work safety hazards:** Work safety hazards are the most frequently occurred risks in a workplace or work environment. They also can vary for different roles. For example, a construction professional may work with specialized machinery, creating unique safety concerns for that role. It may include spills, heights, machinery, electrical, confined space etc.
2. **Chemical hazards:** When a professional is exposed to chemicals in a solid, liquid, or gaseous state, chemical hazards might arise. Those who handle, manufacture, package, ship, or prepare chemical products fall under this category. Certain chemicals are safer than others, however depending on the period of exposure and the individual's susceptibility to chemicals, the effects may vary.
3. **Physical hazards:** Environmental or physical hazards are dangers that exist in our surroundings and have the potential to damage your body without coming into contact. Certain industries are more likely to experience these risks. For example, professionals who work outside may experience more weather-related exposure. It may include radiation, extreme temperature or loud noise.
4. **Ergonomic hazards:** Physical activity or repetitive motions that strain your body can result in ergonomic hazards. Experts who do the same motion over and over again run the risk of damaging their muscles, nerves, ligaments, and tendons. This kind of risk is the most difficult to predict since it can rise with usage and time. It could involve RSI, lifting, awkward postures at work, and workstations.



5. **Biological hazards:** Biological hazards refer to the potential risks that come with handling infectious plant materials, animals, or people. These are more prevalent in several sectors of the economy, including waste management, education, healthcare, and emergency response. It may include blood, bacteria, insects, animal wastes.
6. **Work organization hazards:** Stressors and hazards that result in strain (long-term impacts) and stress (short-term effects) might also affect professionals. These risks are linked to a number of workplace problems, including discrimination, a bad work culture, excessive workloads, and a lack of control.

Considering all the above-mentioned hazards and to know the actual viewpoint, primary data were collected through interview method in which total of 25 participants agreed to participate. The professionals included were lower-level workers, Managers, Operation managers, IT experts, Safety officers, Welfare officers from different industries. Each participant was interviewed through phonic interaction for their responses. All the professionals were working as a full-time employee/worker and were aged between 30-60 years. They all were asked to share their views on the importance of implementing a safety and healthy management program within an organisation. Based on the discussion a model has been developed with a strong belief that if implemented in such a manner can be very beneficial for the organisation. This model has been developed (Figure:1) considering the core elements of safety and healthy management system as per the OSHA guidelines.

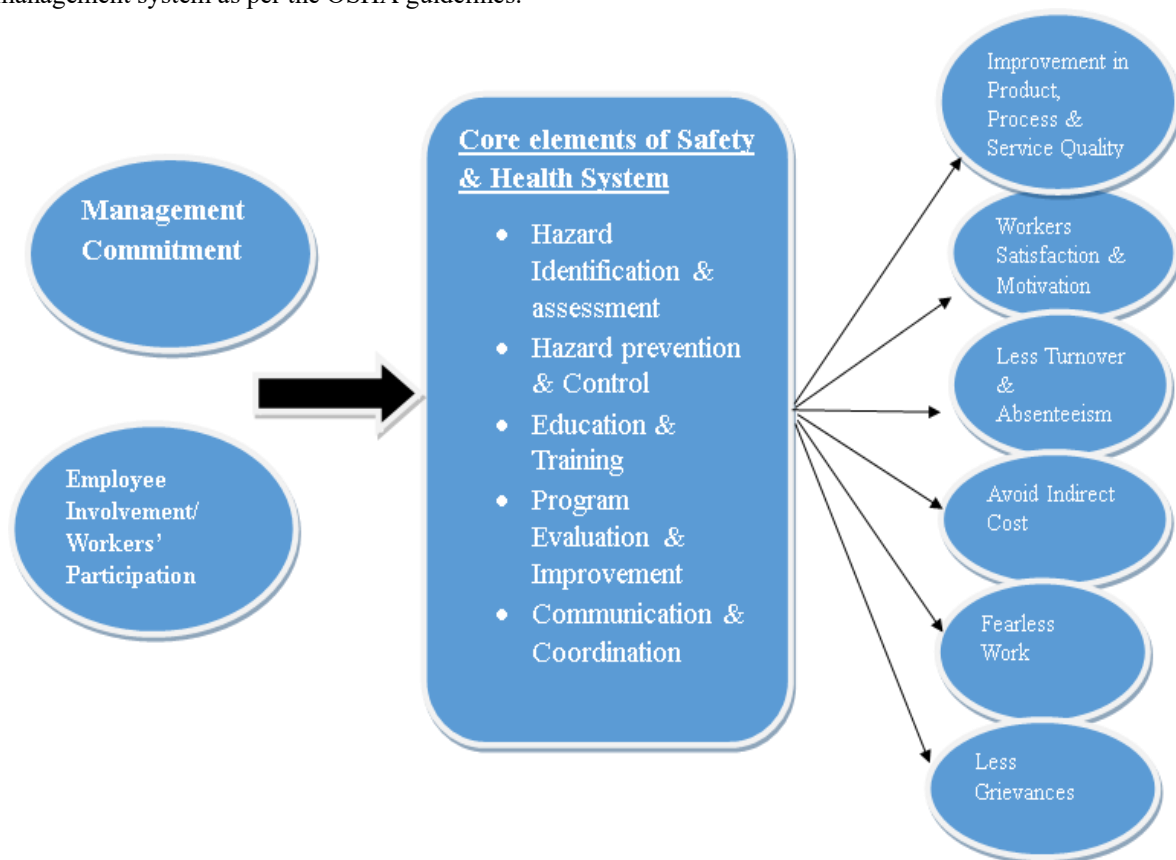


Fig:1 Proposed model of Safety & Health Management System

Depicting the above presented model, it has been clarified that if the management would be committed and responsible and always ensure the involvement and participation of workers, the main goal of the safety and health management system i.e. workplace injuries, illness, deaths can be prevented. Further it can result into increased worker satisfaction, motivation, and less grievances, absenteeism and turnover

In a safety and health management system, management leadership refers to the business owner or senior management team taking ownership of the system, soliciting and acting upon suggestions, establishing objectives and tracking results, and granting access to necessary resources. Perhaps the most important component of a successful safety and health management system is strong and visible management leadership. When the management is committed for providing better health and safety measures to employees, there is always much possibility of less hazardous working conditions, decreased costs for workers' compensation and other insurance, increased productivity and efficiency, better employee morale, and a decrease in employee turnover. Increased trust between management and staff is another benefit of visible management



commitment. The foundation for a robust safety and health "culture" within the company is laid by this leadership. The other components of the safety and health management system are unlikely to function well without a strong commitment from top management.

A key component of safety and health management systems is worker participation that has a significant positive impact on an employer's bottom line. Employees are more likely to be competitive and productive when they are encouraged to share their ideas and feel that their contributions are valued. Having a conversation about health and safety with management and coworkers can improve relationships, increase communication, and lower the number of injuries. Increased productivity, decreased absenteeism, and increased loyalty are all correlated with improved employee morale and satisfaction.

As explained in the figure: 2, if a better safety and health management system can be developed for an organisation, it can benefit the organisation in a number of ways. Employers may find out that implementing the above discussed practices may also save the indirect cost of the company. Most importantly, the organisation can focus on profit maximization and improve in productivity without any kind of deviation. This viewpoint could be explored more with the help of the Core Elements of a Safety Management System as per the OSHA guideline and the explained model above in fig:1

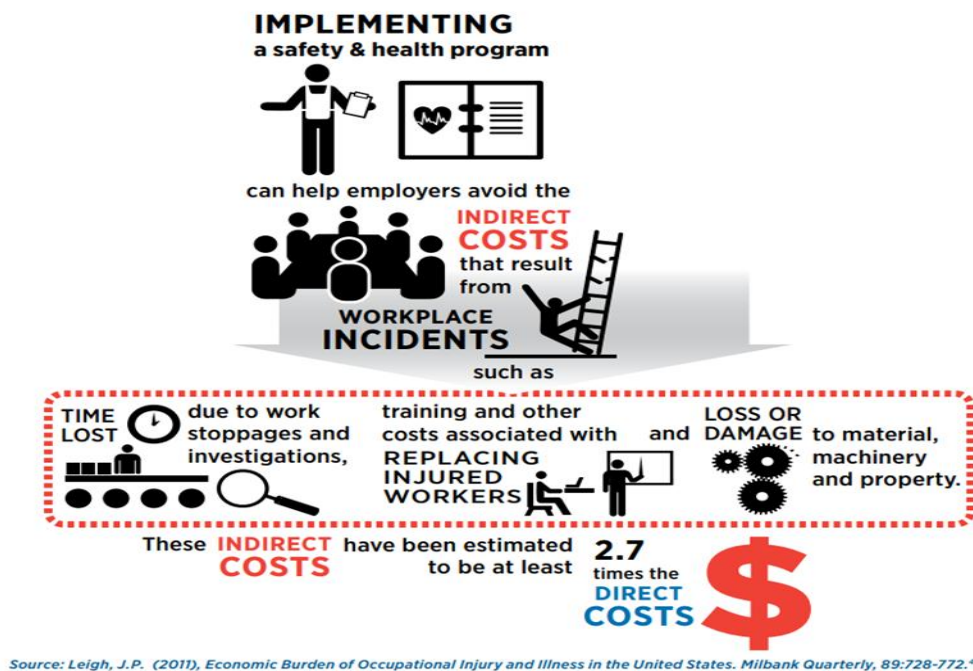


Fig: 2 Benefits of safety & health program

4. CONCLUSION:

It has been shown that by reducing the social, financial, and individual costs related to illnesses, injuries, and fatalities, safety and health management systems may benefit both employers and society as a whole. Numerous studies have examined the effectiveness of safety and health management systems at the corporate and establishment levels. This article claims that these systems are effective in altering the workplace culture, which lowers the number of illnesses, accidents, and fatalities; lowers the expenses of workers' compensation and other benefits; increases morale and communication; enhances reputation and image; and enhances processes, products, and services. This study also highlights important components of effective systems, including management leadership, commitment and dedication, effective employee involvement, the incorporation of health and safety into business planning, and continuous system evaluation.

Despite the value to employers and workers in terms of injuries prevented and money saved, many institutions have not yet adopted safety and health management systems that unite worker safety. Based on the positive experience of employers with existing systems, It has been identified that safety and health management systems provides the basis for breakthrough changes in the way employers identify and control hazards, leading to significantly improved overall workplace health and safety environments. Adoption of safety and health management systems will result in both improved workers safety and workers suffering fewer injuries, illnesses and fatalities

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