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Strengthening Safety Culture in Health and Safety Organizations

# Problem Statement

The primary aim of the study was to assess whether health and safety organizations (HSO) can enhance the safety culture through the establishment of potential interactions between the HSO members and HSO. An industrial plant was opted to conduct the study and address the research. The proposition is that these developmental activities will create an integrated and potential HSO engaged in enhancing safety-related interactions. Ultimately, safety culture indicators will strengthen.

**Background**

There exists a conspicuous scarcity of culture change intervention research in the safety literature. The underdeveloped nature of theoretical framework for safety culture is the reason of the lack of research. In addition, the advancement to research the organizational culture has remained almost non-existent. A widely acknowledged model of safety culture has not been interpreted in true letter and spirits. Various scholars have underpinned attributes of safety culture in organizations through theoretical frameworks. For instance, Schein specifies that the organizational culture is a pattern of mutual preliminary assumptions which a community embraces after overcoming complexities of internal integration and external adjustment. It is a challenging task to locate, highlight and address the preliminary assumptions. In the paradigm of safety science, scholars proposed alternative modes to assess safety because of unconscious nature of preliminary assumptions. All these variables call for the need for integrated research on safety culture by merging theories on climate complex adaptive systems and organizational culture.

**Methods**

The study comprised a quasi-experimental case study with baseline and follow-up measurement twenty-three months apart (Nielsen). A quasi-experiment and action research permitted the researchers to proceed with the study as the intervention processes built. The industrial plant had 275 workers namely Danish industrial plant. The population of the study focused on 5 supervisors of the company, production manager, safety manager and CEO. The company's HSO comprised 5 safety groups, the production manager and safety manager.

Besides, the study utilized a multi-method approach with observations, document analysis, semi-structured interviews, safety-related interactions and questionnaire. To map informal safety-related interactions, each member of HSO was directed to register the safety interactions in which they participated. The study duration was baseline (BL), follow-up (FU) and midway (MW). If a day passed without safety-related interactions, they filled out the date and then ticked the box: "no safety-related instructions today".

**Results**

The activities of HSO and HSC aimed at resolving safety issues were varied throughout previous years. Prior to the study, 62 issues took place and 115 the year before that. The number of issues resolved also accelerated with the passage of time as 32 and 50 respectively (Nielsen). However, the production managers did not promulgate various safety-related interactions. The interaction between safety representatives and supervisor was enhanced as: from baseline to midway, midway to follow-up and further from baseline to follow-up. 16 lost-time injuries were reported in the 1st study year 12 in the 2nd as compared to 18 the year before the study.



Figure 1: Development in lost time injury rates during the study period and the previous years (injuries/million hours) (Nielsen)

**Conclusion**

The compliance with the OHSA has not been significantly assessed in the article. Since these procedures are essential for adjudication, incorporating an in-depth interpretation would have added strength and productivity to the study. The study is an explicit illustration that HSO can enhance safety culture by establishing integrated safety-related interactions both within the HSO members and the shop-floor. The bottom line is that the improvements in interactions assemble a cultural change to strengthen safety operations.

# Works Cited

Nielsen, Kent J. "Improving Safety Culture through the Health and Safety Organization: A Case Study." *Journal of Safety Research*, vol. 48, Feb. 2014, pp. 7–17. *ScienceDirect*, doi:10.1016/j.jsr.2013.10.003.