Towards a safety climate framework to improve communication and worker involvement in occupational accident prevention at construction sites in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

The research analysed factors that contribute to poor communication and low worker involvement in accident reduction at Hwange Thermal Power Station Expansion Project (HTPSEP) construction site. An analytical research design was employed in this research and data was collected using closed and open-ended questionnaires, interviews and direct-field observations. Data was analysed using Relative Importance Index method (RII), Microsoft Excel and content analysis. The findings from the research indicated that work pressure or work overload, language barriers, lack of training, culture, and fear of reporting accidents were the top five barriers leading to poor communication and worker participation in accident prevention. The provision of PPE, training, and visual translations were the most applied measures meant to address the problems faced in communication, and the participation of workers in accident prevention at HTPSEP. The RII results generated from the study indicated that the provision of PPE is the most effective measure used at HTPSEP to address problems in communication and participation in safety at work. However, the success of these measures was limited due to challenges such as a lack of commitment by top management, language barriers, and a rush to meet project deadlines. The research concluded that, if not addressed, the barriers can lead to problems such as occupational injuries, conflicts, and disputes. A safety climate framework to improve communication and worker involvement in accident prevention at construction sites was designed for possible implementation.

Keywords: Accident prevention, Employee communication, Employee participation, Construction site