INFLUENCE OF OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY ON EMPLOYEES’ JOB COMMITMENT IN SELECTED CEMENT COMPANIES IN OGUN STATE

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Abstract

The extent to which an organisation achieves its corporate objectives depends largely on the commitment of its workforce. Employees in the cement producing companies are exposed to many hazards at their workplace and this tends to affect their levels of job commitment. This study therefore, examines the influence of occupational health and safety on employees’ job commitment in selected cement producing companies in Ogun State. The study adopted descriptive survey and used accidental sampling procedure to select a sample of 222 respondents from two cement factories in Ogun State. The two research instruments used were 14 items scale by Indakwa (2013) was adapted for occupational health and safety while Mayer and Allens (1996) 24 items scale on employees’ commitment was adapted. Using the regression analysis, the results of tests of hypothesis show that occupational health and safety significantly influence employees’ job commitment. It was recommended, among other things, that more awareness among workers in the company and other similar organisations be created through health and safety education. Also, occupational health and safety policies and practices should be effectively implemented in cement companies, while safety awards could equally be introduced as an incentive for supervisors and employees of units where no accidents occur.

Key Words: Cement Producing Companies, Employees’ Job Commitment, Occupational Health and Safety.

1. Introduction

In Nigeria today, cement producing industries use huge and sophisticated machines and technologies in their operations. Also, it is an industry which the environment is prone to accidents and injuries because of the movement of machines and other heavy equipment’s and their operations. In spite of high incidences of industrial accidents in the cement producing organisations, the human resources managers and the industrial relations practitioners in that sector seem not to give adequate attention to the issue of occupational health and safety, instead emphasis is mostly laid on issues relating to salary increase, minimum wage and host of others (Yesufu, 2000; Bankole, 2008). Occupational health and safety is an area of knowledge concerned with protecting the safety, health and welfare of people engaged in work or employment (Khan, Mustaq & Tabassum, 2014). Also, Amponsah-Tawiah and Darteby-Baah (2011), defined occupational health and safety as a broad base concept that encapsulates the mental, emotional and physical well-being of the worker in relation to the conduct of his work. The goals of occupational safety and health programs include fostering a safe and healthy work environment.

The protection of workers generally against health and safety hazards at work has been emphasised in International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions and recommended. In the word of Koffi Annan (former UN Secretary General) cited by Amponsah-Tawiah and Baah (2011), health and safety is not only a sound socio-economic and political policy; rather a basic human right. To Neal and Griffin (2006), safety environment in an organisation will impact positively on employee’s job commitment and it will determine the extent to which health and safety management will positively impacts employee’s job commitment. Friendly working environment associated with positive attitude among the workers can influence safety behavior and practices and lead to employees’ job commitment. Study by Robin and Walker (2000) reveal that occupational health and safety management not only provides a sense of security to employees, but also leads to a reduction of accidents and ultimately increases job commitment from the workforce. In every organisation, all activities and arrangements must be in the right position to protect and safeguard human lives from work-related accidents and illness. The health and safety of employees are very significant issues to be considered in relation to organisational goal and employees job commitment (Iheanacho & Ebitu, 2016).

In the same vein, Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) and Trade Union Congress (TUC), had declared strikes severally on wage increments but had hardly declared strike due to poor conditions of work and services or absence of good health and safety policy in place of work, indexing poor appreciation of the weighty issues of health and safety at work.
Therefore, it is imperative for cement producing companies to put in place health and safety policies that could safeguard their workers from work-related accidents and illness. Though some of the measures put in place by the cement producing companies are mandated by law, yet others are based on the fact that the employers want to increase productivity by limiting many hours lost due to accident and injuries that occur at work place. Idorado (2011) traced the origin of occupational health and safety regulations in Nigeria to United Kingdom and United States of America, where majority of them are adopted from. The occupational health and safety bill of 2012 in Nigeria was designed to ensure a safe working environment in all industrial sectors both formal and informal sector. According to Armstrong (2012), the achievement of a healthy and safe place of work is the responsibility of everyone employed in an organisation as well as contract staff or casual workers.

However, some organisations lack safety training education, accident prevention measures, and health and safety practices. Also, they are not safety conscious because safety policy procedures are completely absent, thus exposing the employees to workplace injuries (Indakwa, 2013). With limited resources to help reduce occupational injuries, companies struggle with how to best focus these resources to achieve the greatest reduction in injuries for the optimal cost. The importance of healthy workplaces is increasingly being recognized as a broad concept influencing quality of life at the individual level to substantial impacts on public health at the societal level (Amponsah-Tawiah & Mensah, 2016). With increasing industrialisation and its consequent increase in industrial accidents and exposure to dangerous chemicals with their accompanying health implications for employees and others, the issue of health and safety management has become more pressing than ever. Idubor and Oisamoje (2013) identify unemployment as one of the factors that embolden non-compliance with occupational health and safety regulations by some organisation because the level of unemployment in Nigeria is so high and keep increasing.

According to Trading Economics (2013), as cited in Umeokafor, Umeadi and Jones (2014), unemployment in Nigeria rose from 21.10% in 2010 to 23.90% in 2011 and in the year 2017 dropped at 19.70%. This gives employers the opportunity to manipulate the employees by paying low wages or the impunity to take advantage of workers to work under dehumanising conditions provided they have jobs. Therefore, if factories works being carried out violate occupational health and safety regulations at the same time under dangerous conditions, the workers are unable to complain, for they risk losing their jobs. Iheanacho and Ebitu, (2016), opined that some organizations, especially those in developing countries such as Nigeria, still aim at maintaining or increasing productivity and profitability at the expense of employee health and safety thereby reducing employee job commitment. For example, International Labour Organisation (2012), reported that 317 million accidents occur on the job annually worldwide many of these resulting in extended absences from work. Occupational health and safety therefore remains an important consideration for all organisations, particularly organisations engaged in high risk operations such as the cement producing companies and other mining industries (Amponsah-Tawiah & Dartey-Baah, 2011).

Good occupational health and safety practices not only provide a safer working environment but also improve workers morale and productivity (Landsbergis, Grzywacz, & Lamontagne, 2014). By pursuing good occupational health and safety practices, businesses face fewer workplace injuries and benefit from higher employee retention rates and enhanced corporate image (Karbalaei & Shirvani, 2015). It has been observed over time that due to the risky nature of jobs in the construction sector, construction workers tend to be most vulnerable to fatalities and diverse occupational hazards, some of which are preventable if there had been adequate measure in place (Bankole, Ajala, Genty & Oderinde, 2017). Lim (2012) asserts that when workers understand the safety rules and procedures of their job and the tools used for working through adequate health and safety education, they will be prevented from falling victims to occupational hazards.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The rapid industrialisation in the past four decades, which arose from global technology advancement, has consistently rendered Nigerian workers, especially those in cement producing companies, vulnerable to the high risks of work-related hazards such as hearing loss, skin and lung cancer. The apparent shortfalls in protection of vulnerable employees have implications for job commitment. For instance, work congress on safety and health in Singapore 2015 report, says there were 2.4million deaths due to fatal work-related diseases, an increase of 0.4million compared to 2011, in total. It is estimated that more than 7,500 people die every day; 1,000 from occupational accidents and 6,500 from work-related diseases (Hamalainen, Takala, & Kiati, 2017). Unfortunately, in spite of high incidences of industrial accidents going in the cement producing organisations, the human resources managers and the industrial relations practitioners in that sector seem not to give adequate attention to the issue of occupational health and safety, instead emphasis is mostly laid on issues relating to salary increase,
minimum wage and host of others. Though, previous studies such as Yusuf, Eliyana and Sari (2012) focused on occupational safety and health on performance with job satisfaction far away in Indonesia, Iheanacho and Ebitu (2013) focused on occupational health and safety practices as they relate to job performance of employees particularly in the metropolitan cities like Cross River. This study however focused attention on occupational health and safety as it relates to employees job commitment in selected cement companies in non-metropolitan cities of Ewekoro and Ibeshe in Ogun State.

1.2 Objective of the Study
To investigate the influence of occupational health and safety on employees’ job commitment.

1.3 Research Question
Will occupational health and safety influence employees’ job commitment?

1.4 Research Hypothesis
Occupational health and safety does not significantly influence employees’ job commitment.

2. Literature Review

Theoretical and empirical evidence on the issues of workers’ health and safety and its implication for employees’ job commitment are no hard to find in literature (Mayer and Allen, 1996; Bankole and Lawal, 2012; Peace and Mohammed, 2014). Some of the theories and empirical works of many scholars are reviewed as follows.

Theoretical Framework
A theory is an underlying assumption tested and accepted as the basis of explanation for observed relationship in a given circumstance.

We have numerous theories on employees commitment, prominent and most recognised among the theories is the work of Mayer and Allen (1996), in this approach, employee commitment has three multi-dimensional components namely: affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. Affective commitment, involves the employee’s emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organisation, is normally linked to a favorable working environment and relationships with the other employees. Normative commitment, on the other hand, involves the employee’s feelings of obligation to stay with the organisation. Employees may feel they owe the organisation for being given a job when they need it most. Finally, continuance commitment, involves commitment based on the costs that the employee associated with leaving the organisation and which may make leaving the current job very costly or troublesome.

Social Exchange Theory is one of the most prominent conceptual perspectives in management, as well as related fields like sociology and social psychology. However, it will be the base for this study. Some of the proponents of this theory include: Homans (1958), Blau (1964). This model of social exchange theory stipulates that certain workplace antecedents lead to interpersonal connections, referred to as social exchange relationships. To Blau (1964), successful exchange can cause one individuals to become committed to another, suggesting that an exchange may sometimes affect relationships. Social exchange relationships evolve when employers “take care of employees,” which thereby engenders beneficial consequences. In other words, the social exchange relationship is a mediator or intervening variable: Advantageous and fair transactions between strong relationships and these relationships produce effective work behavior and positive employee attitudes. This line of reasoning has received much attention most of which uses Blau’s (1964) framework to describe social exchange relationships.

Review of Empirical Works
According to Bankole and Lawal (2012), due to the introduction of high technical equipment and work processes, workers in the manufacturing sector are daily exposed to diverse occupational health hazards such as dusts, gases, noises, vibration, radiation, extreme temperature and highly reactive chemicals like carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, ozone, sulphuric acid, nitrogen oxide and host of others, which led to sudden death, of some workers and gross deficit in the health status of others. This therefore makes occupational health and safety an important discipline contributing to the success of any organisation. Considering the multiplicity of disciplines subsumed in it, it has been treated as a throw-away subject with all the other disciplines such as law, economics, medicine, technology, psychology among others feasting on it when hungry. Employee’s security encourages a long term outlook within and outside organisation, promoting trust and organisational commitment. Researchers such as Peace and Mohammed (2014), emphases that organisations value commitment among their employees because it assumed to reduce withdrawal behavior, such as lateness, absenteeism and turnover.
As such, employment security is one of the means by which firms can improve their performance and get more commitment from the employees and as well leads to industrial peace and harmony (Lim, 2012). However, Amabye (2016), notes that the importance of occupational health and safety practice is often overlooked in Africa. This is because, the level of occupational health and safety is low compared with the rest of the world. In Sub-Saharan Africa public health problems of child mortality, malaria, water quality and HIV/AIDS have overshadowed occupational health problems. According to available literature, risk factors leading to injuries are present in every occupation and among all occupations with industrial and agricultural workers having the highest risks. Governments in developing countries have apathy to occupational health and safety issues and all the stakeholders, ranging from the management, workers and government do not appreciate the problems that can be solved or mitigated through occupational health and safety. Occupational health and safety is a multidisciplinary concept that concentrate on the promotion of safety, health and welfare of people engaged in work or employment (Amponsah-Tawiah and Mensah, 2016). It ensures a safe and healthy work environment, protects co-workers, family members, employers and customers from hazards.

Thus occupational health and safety has gradually developed from a monodisciplinary risk-oriented activity to a multidisciplinary and comprehensive approach that considers the individual’s physical, mental and social well-being, general health and personal development (WHO, 2007). The above understanding coupled with the fact that at the core of every business is man whose output is partially dependent on his state of health, an appreciation of the concept of occupational health and safety becomes imperative to the success of any organisation. Occupational health and safety is a major problem all over the world (Khan, Mustaq, & Tabassum, 2014), as a result of these, occupational incidents every year nearly one thousand people die and two thousand people are injured leading to temporary and permanent disability. This also leads to social and economic problem for these people and their families suffer from occupational accidents socially and psychologically. Wilson, Takahashi and Sakurai (2007), assess the relationship between the ratification status of occupational health and safety related ILO conventions and the reported occupational fatality rates of ILO members, after controlling for possible factors such as income levels and length of ILO membership, they show that non-ratifying countries generally have statistically higher fatal injury rates.

However, based on this evidence, they argue that all countries should promote ratification of ILO conventions aimed at improving OSH conditions. The term occupational health and safety has not been a new terminology as it was used by OHSAS 18001 (2008) as cited in Dwomoh, Owusu and Addo (2013), to describe all the factors and conditions that affect health and safety in the workplace, or could affect health and safety in the workplace. The general international statistics and historical view indicate that occupational health and safety has always been challenging (Khan, et al, 2014) and the integration of occupational health and safety into worksite management, allocation of safety activities, and the role of employees’ involvement in safety matters are the features that previous literature classifies as correlated to lower injury rates. Organisations that are committed to health and safety have policies that guide both management and employees in ensuring that the working environment is injury free for their workers. And for the policies to be fully implemented and proven successful (Armstrong, 2012), emphasis that it is important for the organisation to involves its employees in the development because employees commitment is significant since it determines whether employees are likely to leave their job or improve performance.

The issue of occupational health and safety management in cement producing companies and other mining sector of Nigeria economy is on the rise because of the increasing demand for mineral resources and high risk factors associated within and also as a result of diversification from one major source of revenue (crude oil). In developing nations, the rate of industrial and occupational mining injury-related deaths and disabilities is on the rise. As a result, the mining sectors of these mineral-endowed developing countries are highly prone to these occupational injury-related deaths and disabilities (Amponsah-Tawiah and Mensah, 2016). But Wachter and Yorio (2014) opined that when organisations invested in a safety management system they approached towards improving the performance of accident reduction/prevention and the occupational safety and such organisations will also care for winning the hearts and minds of their workers and it will develop and improved organisational commitment. Thus, commitment is usually stronger among long-term employees, those who have experienced personal success in the organisation, and those working with a committed employee group.

While May-Chiun, Ramayah and Min (2009), conclude that employees with sense of commitment are less likely to engage in withdrawal behavior and more willing to accept change. Research presented in the Health and Safety Executive (2004) as cited by Indakwa (2013), in 19 case studies, established that health and safety management leads to higher productivity, lower absenteeism, improved staff morale and relations. It is because of these benefits that many employers and safety practitioners have adopted three main approaches in managing safety and dealing with safety issues. These are: organisational approach, engineering approach and individual approach. The
organisational approach involves designing jobs, developing and implementing safety policies, using safety committees and coordinating accident investigation. The engineering approach on the other hand involves designing work settings and equipment, reviewing equipment and applying ergonomic principles. Finally, there is the individual approach which involves reinforcing safety motivation and attitudes, providing employee safety training and rewarding safety through incentives such as gifts like electronics as the practice in one of the company under review.

Agbola (2012), on impact of health and safety management on employee safety at Port Authority discovered that there are poor health and safety management practices, poor training on safety, lack of information on dangerous chemicals and hazardous materials, lack of monitoring and enforcement of safety rules as well as essential safety equipment. Kalejaiye (2013), highlights lack of safety culture in the family, education sector as some of the challenges facing occupational health and safety environment in Nigeria industrial sector. Idubor and Osiamoje (2013), contend that the few companies in Nigeria who recognize occupational health and safety are the big multinationals who are running the policies constituted in their parent countries of origin. Occupational health and safety practice is still at infancy in most indigenous organisations in Nigeria.

The Link between Occupational Health and Safety and Employees Job Commitment

According to Amponsah-Tawiah and Mensah, (2016), management commitment to health and safety indicates the extent to which the organization’s top management demonstrates positive and supportive safety attitudes toward their employees’ safety. Like a strong magnetic force attracting one metallic object to another, commitment is a force that binds an individual to a course of action of relevance to one or more targets which is a measure of the employee’s willingness to remain with a firm in the future. While, Azeez, Jayeoba and Adeoye, (2016), perceived employees commitment as a factor for achieving organisational efficiency in Nigeria working environment. Poor and safety practice could negatively affect organisation morale and make recruiting difficult especially in cement producing companies and other high risk industries. Mullins (1999), in management and organisational behavior, opined that a high level of employee commitment implies willingness to work for the organisations benefit, but that its continuation depends on the reciprocal commitment by the organisation to its member, because employees today are increasingly self-assured and cognizant of their value to employers and they would consciously choose to work for those companies that meet their workplace expectations in terms of health and safety.

Cole (2002) posits that employees who are healthy and feel safe are those who can fully invest their capabilities and exploit the best of their potentials to work and commitment on the part of the employees is the relative strength of an individual’s identification with and involvement in an organisation. In the same vein, Sinclair, Tucker, Wright and Cullen (2005) are of the view that when organisations fail to address poor working conditions such as health and safety issues, workers are more likely to judge the costs of staying with the firm as exceeding the costs of leaving. In the current industrial climate in Nigerian, there is need to be concerned not only for producing goods or services, but also for the organisation to put in place a better working environment that will guarantee the health and safety of all employees regardless their academic status or positions in the organisation. In contributions of Dwomoh, et al (2013), since health and safety policies put in place by the organisations will involve cost, it is necessary for one to access the significant occupational health and safety have on employees commitment which will determines whether employees are likely to leave their jobs or improve performance. To have committed employees, management must show concern for the safety, health, and welfare of people engaged at work. Individuals with low levels of commitment will not put in their best in organisation.

3. Methodology

The study used descriptive survey research design to examine the influence of occupational health and safety on employees job commitment in selected cement producing companies in Ogun State. The study population includes all permanent staff of LafargeWapco Cement, Ewekoro, Itori Local Government and Dangote Cement Company situated at Ibeshe in Yewa North Local Government Area of Ogun State with the use of Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sampling size determination table, a sample of two hundred and sixty (260) was selected from the population of seven hundred and fifty eight (758) using accidental sampling method.

Table 1: Sample determination size for LafargeWapco Cement and Dangote Cement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>LafargeWapco Cement</th>
<th>DangoteCement</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>525</td>
<td>758</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample size</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample Retrieved</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SampleUsed</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The study adapted two scales for data collections purposes and the instruments are validated by experts in measurement and evaluation from Lagos State University. For occupational health and safety, a 14 items scale by Indakwa (2013) was adapted, using 4-point Likert’s type rating scale: ranging from strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), agree (3), and strongly agree (4). Thereafter, it was pilot tested for reliability using test re-test method and reliability co-efficient of 0.83.

Also, a 24 items scale on employees’ commitment by Meyer and Allen (1996) was adapted, using a 4-point Likert’s type rating scale: ranging from Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Agree (3), and Strongly Agree (4). The scale produced reliability co-efficient of 0.80. The copies of the questionnaire were administered personally by the researcher with the help of two experienced research assistants. As shown in table 1, a total of two hundred and sixty (260) copies of questionnaire were administered, out of which 239 copies were retrieved but only 222 copies were certified valid for final analysis with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. Data were analyzed using simple linear regression analysis at 0.05 level of significance.

4. Results and Discussion
This section comprised of the tested hypothesis utilizing the regression analysis. Below are the results of the analysis.

Table 2: Model Summary of regression analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>Std. Error of the Estimate</th>
<th>Change Statistics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R Square Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F Change  df1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>.706</td>
<td>.499</td>
<td>.497</td>
<td>.15006</td>
<td>.499</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Predictors: (Constant), Occupational Health and Safety
b. Dependent Variable: Employees’ Job Commitment

Table 2 shows values of R square, adjusted R square and the standard error of the estimate. The Adjusted R square value of .497 shows that 49.7% variation in the dependent variable (employee job commitment) is as a result of the change in the independent variable (occupational health and safety). Thus, other variables not considered in this current study accounted for the remaining 50.3%.

Table 3: ANOVA table showing the influence of occupational health and safety on employees job commitment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regression</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.4931</td>
<td>218.982</td>
<td>Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>.023</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>.9885</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Dependent Variable: Employees Job Commitment
b. Predictors: (Constant), Occupational Health Safety

Table 3 shows that overall significance of the model. The coefficient sum of squares is 4.931 while the number of observation is 221 with df = 1. The F value which measures the overall fit of the model is 218.982 with significance value P < 0.05, Fcritical = 3.9201. Since computed F is greater than critical value, we conclude that the model is statistically significant.

Discussion of Findings
The study examined the influence of occupational health and safety on employees’ job commitment using data from two cement manufacturing companies. The simple linear regression analysis of the study confirmed that independent variable (occupational health and safety) significantly influence dependent variable (employees job commitment) in Lafarge Wapco cement and Dangote cement respectively. This finding is consistent with social exchange theory by Homan (1961) and Blau (1964). Social exchange relationships evolve when employers “take care of employees,” which engenders beneficial consequences. This finding is line with the work of Amponsah-Tawiah and Mensah (2016), that occupational health and safety influences employees’ comitment because employees’ perception of the management of health and safety in the organisation influences their decision to stay in the organisation and to contribute favourably to the organisation. It also corroborates Amabye (2016), where employees perceive the management of health and safety in the organisation to be appropriate and adequate; they
are more likely to have a continuing relationship with the organisation knowing that their health and safety are secured in the organisation. Where the employees perceive that their health and safety is under threat through their evaluation of the management of health and safety in the organisation, they tend to exhibit anti-social behaviour.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Occupational health and safety is an important strategy not only to protect the health and safety of workers, but also to contribute positively to productivity, quality of products, work motivation and, job commitment. The study assessed the influence of occupation health and safety on employee’s job commitment in cement producing companies in Ogun State. Analysis of data indicated that occupational health and safety positively influence employees’ job commitment. Employees’ health at work and healthy work environments are among the most valuable assets of individuals, organisations and countries. It is therefore imperative that organisations in the cement producing companies in Ogun State particularly Lafarge/Wapco and Dangote recognise the fact that workers who feel healthy and safe in the performance of their duties would have a sense of obligation to their organisation and are most likely to stay with the organisation. In view of this, there is need for Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), trade union congress (TUC) and civil society groups to create more awareness through safety education and encourage the execution of effective OHS policies and practices amongst private and government organisations respectively. While organisations should make sure that safety managers and other top management staff as well as employees are held accountable for safety breaches and appropriate disciplinary measures taken to guide against future occurrences. Motivation in the form of safety awards could also be given monthly or quarterly as an incentive for supervisors and employees of units where no accident occur as the case in LafargeWapco Cement Company.

References


