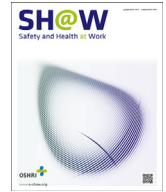




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## Original Article

## Occupational Health and Safety Management and Turnover Intention in the Ghanaian Mining Sector

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** The mining industry is considered as one of the most dangerous and hazardous industries and the need for effective and efficient occupational health and safety management is critical to safeguard workers and the industry. Despite the dangers and hazards present in the mining industry, only few studies have focused on how occupational health and safety and turnover intentions in the mines. **Method:** The study using a cross-sectional survey design collected quantitative data from the 255 mine workers that were conveniently sampled from the Ghanaian mining industry. The data collection tools were standardized questionnaires that measured occupational health and safety management and turnover intentions. These scales were also pretested before their usage in actual data collection.

**Results:** The correlation coefficient showed that a negative relationship existed between dimensions of occupational health and safety management and turnover intention; safety leadership ( $r = -0.33$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ); supervision ( $r = -0.26$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ); safety facilities and equipment ( $r = -0.32$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ); safety procedure ( $r = -0.27$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Among these dimensions, safety leadership and safety facility were significant predictors of turnover intention, ( $\beta = -0.28$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and ( $\beta = -0.24$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) respectively. The study also found that turnover intention of employees is heavily influenced by the commitment of safety leadership in ensuring the effective formulation of policies and supervision of occupational health and safety at the workplace.

**Conclusion:** The present study demonstrates that safety leadership is crucial in the administration of occupational health and safety and reducing turnover intention in organizations.

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## 1. Introduction

Workers like any human in developing countries assume their organizations will take all the necessary measures to ensure that they return home safely at the end of the work day, yet work-related injuries and deaths continue to occur at an alarming rate. There are more than 250 million work-related accidents every year [1]. Workplace hazards and exposure cause over 160 million workers to fall ill annually, while it has been estimated that more than 1.2 million workers die as a result of occupational accidents and diseases [ILO Annual report, 2011]. The United States recorded a preliminary of 4,405 fatal work injuries [Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013] compared with 4,628 reported work injuries in 2012, resulting in an estimated 80 million production days lost for that year and

almost 60 million days in future years. This is an indication of the man commitment to work and the spate of accidents, injuries, and deaths at the workplace. Occupational health and safety management is one of the most important aspects of human concern. It aims at an adaptation of the working environment to workers for the promotion and maintenance of the highest degree of physical, mental, and social well-being of workers in all occupations [2].

Due to globalized economic trends, the subject of safety in the workplace has taken on such importance that international conventions have been instituted by the international organization for standardization to help regulate and bring about improved workplace conditions and services [3]. The subject of safety and health in the workplace covers a wide spectrum of issues like safety of employees and employers, retaining and employing the best

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employees, and turnover of the workforce. The desire to provide a safe, productive work environment while reducing liability and the hidden bottom line losses of downtime is driving facility managers and building owners to establish comprehensive safety and health management programs [4]. Having such a program at the facility ensures a safe environment where accidents and illnesses are minimized, and where such incidents are handled properly [4]. Safety in the workplace is such a complex issue; hence managing the safety function can be a challenging process. This complexity is rooted in the fact that safety is a condition of employment and is, therefore, subject to the full spectrum of employment laws, including workers compensation law [5].

Work-related injury and disease present a serious and costly burden to all countries and a major challenge to managers, unions, governments and most especially workers themselves. Steenkamp and Van Schoor [6] rightfully mention that occupational health and safety is a complex international problem for management and society, and that it must always be a top priority. Small mistakes can have a major effect and disasters do not have borders or nationalities, which is why nations should unite and promote occupational health and safety vigorously to reach the common goal of quick warning, prevention, and protection systems for all [7]. The need to provide a safe and healthy work environment for employees has long been the responsibility of management and the company as a whole. Health and Safety measures, which protect employees from hazards in the work place, can conflict with managements' objective of containing production cost [8]. Employees must work in a sound and protected environment so that they can contribute their best to the achievement of organizational goals. Hence, it is most vital to uphold health and safety at the workplace since it develops a considerable impact on the repute of a company. It is in the interest of workers and their representative to earn a living, and also to reach old age in healthy conditions World Health Organization (WHO), 2007. These interests are not contradictory but complementary to the organization's interest. Making working conditions healthy and safe is in the interest of workers, employers, and governments, as well as the public at large. Although it seems simple and obvious, this idea has not yet gained meaningful universal recognition. Hundreds of millions of people throughout the world are employed today in conditions that breed ill health and/or are unsafe.

In Africa, Ghana specifically, employees pose a complete new set of challenges, especially in the mining sector where there is a high labor turnover and frequent accident manifestation. It has become more difficult to retain employees, as the pools of talents are tapped-out. There are new risks in the developing countries in parallel with the enlargement of the industrial or mining sector [9]. The most prominent of these risks leading to occupational illnesses are especially muscular and skeleton diseases [10]. The existence of the risks threatening employees' health in the offices leads to occupational accidents and diseases. In other words, the occupational accidents in the business cause a considerable cost of time and money because it creates job losses. Millions of workers either die, get injured, or fall ill every year as a result of workplace hazards. The suffering in terms of human life is enormous, while the economic cost of the failure to ensure occupational health and safety is so great that it may undermine national aspirations for sustainable economic and social development. Higher salaries and compensation benefits may seem the most likely way to attract employees. However, quality of the physical workplace environment may also have a strong influence on a company's ability to recruit and retain talented people. Safety and health factors in the work place affect employees' desire to remain with an organization [Leblebici, 2012]. Leblebici [X] further asserts that adverse and unsafe working conditions have been shown to affect employees' intentions to stay with the organization or quit. Turnover in the

mining industry is increasing, as employees in the sector keep recycling themselves from one company to the other. Hazards associated with the industry are well documented and hence the sector is christened "hazardous sector". Could the perceived inadequate occupational health and safety management practices among mine workers be the cause of the constant movement of mine workers – musical chairs in the sector? This makes the issue of employees leaving become a headache to employers who are striving to gain competitive advantage. To what extent should organizations suffer the problem with employees leaving for different organizations when they are not satisfied with what they do? This research focuses primarily on examining the relationship between the dimensions of occupational health and safety management systems and turnover intention in the mining sector of Ghana. This study therefore tested the following hypotheses:

- Safety leadership or managers role as a dimension of occupational health and safety management will significantly predict turnover intention.
- Supervisory dimension of occupational health and safety management will significantly predict turnover intention.
- Safety facilities or equipment as a dimension of occupational health and safety will significantly predict turnover intention of mine workers.
- Procedural dimension of occupational health and safety will significantly predict turnover intention.

## 2. Material and methods

### 2.1. Research design

The cross-sectional survey design was the design for this study. The cross-sectional nonexperimental design was used because data was collected from participants of different backgrounds by recording vital data from selected participants at a time. This design was adopted because it could lead the researchers to obtain thorough information on the topic under study and to draw meaningful conclusions from the data obtained.

### 2.2. Sample and sampling technique

The study used a convenient sampling technique to select the organizations for the study. Thus, the study collected information from organizations that were readily available and willing to participate in this study. The purposive sampling technique was then used to select operational mine workers out of the various classification of mine workers as respondents for the study. The purposive sampling technique was adopted because the study sought to collect data from a specific group of people with needed and relevant knowledge.

Participants in this study were 255 employees of three major mining companies in Ghana. These participants represented cumulatively 72.9% of the total population in these mining companies. According to the survey conducted, the majority of the respondents representing 84.3% were men, with 15.7% representing the women respondents. Response rates from each of the three mines sampled are shown in Table 1 below. This confirms the notion that the mining industry of Ghana is characterized as or is a male dominated industry as a result of the risk and hazardous nature of the work.

### 2.3. Instrumentation

The main research instrument used for the data collection was a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire had 39 structured

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