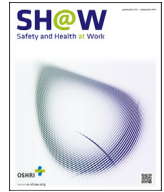




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Original Article

Occupational Health and Safety and Organizational Commitment: Evidence from the Ghanaian Mining Industry



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ABSTRACT

Background: This study seeks to examine the relationship and impact of occupational health and safety on employees' organizational commitment in Ghana's mining industry. The study explores occupational health and safety and the different dimensions of organizational commitment.

Methods: A cross-sectional survey design was used for this study. The respondents were selected based on simple random sampling. Out of 400 questionnaires administered, 370 were returned (77.3% male and 22.7% female) and used for the study. Correlation and multiple regression analysis were used to determine the relationship and impact between the variables.

Results: The findings of this study revealed positive and significant relationship between occupational health and safety management, and affective, normative, and continuance commitment. Additionally, the results revealed the significant impact of occupational health and safety on affective, normative, and continuance commitment.

Conclusion: Management within the mining sector of Ghana must recognize the fact that workers who feel healthy and safe in the performance of their duties, develop emotional attachment and have a sense of obligation to their organization and are most likely committed to the organization. Employees do not just become committed to the organization; rather, they expect management to first think about their health and safety needs by instituting good and sound policy measures. Thus, management should invest in the protection of employees' health and safety in organizations.

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1. Introduction

The mining sector is one of the world's most hazardous sectors (International Labour Organization, ILO) [1], and it is also considered by mine workers as dangerous and hazardous [2]. People working in the mines are exposed to various physical, chemical, mechanical, biological, and psychosocial risk factors [3]. According to Owiredu [4], Ghana is one of the West African countries that has become a preferred destination for mineral investment, with the legal mining industry accounting for more than 49% of the country's gross foreign exchange earnings. Mining activities, however, present not only economic opportunities for the country but also major challenges, particularly in the area of occupational safety and health (OSH) for employees in this sector [3]. 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 [5].

OSH is a multidisciplinary concept that concentrates on the promotion of safety, health, and welfare of people engaged in work or employment [6]. According to Amponsah-Tawiah and Dartey-Baah [7], occupational health and safety encapsulates the mental, emotional, and physical well-being of the worker in relation to the conduct of his work and, as a result, marks an essential subject of interest impacting positively on the achievement of organizational goals. Available data reveal startling and tremendously high rates of work-related deaths and injuries in both developed and developing nations [2,8]. According to the ILO, 2.3 million people die each year owing to work-related accidents or illness, and 350,000 of these deaths are attributable to occupational accidents. Additionally, the ILO estimates that there are 264 million nonfatal accidents each

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year that result in work-related illnesses, leading to approximately 3 days of absence from work [9]. According to Seo et al [10], industries—especially those in developing countries—are suffering enormous economic and personnel costs as a result of injuries and diseases related to work. In a recent publication, the ILO revealed that the everyday occurrence of 860,000 occupational accidents with either a direct or indirect cost for occupational illnesses and accidents is estimated at \$2.8 trillion worldwide [9].

However, despite these startling global figures on occupational health and safety, only a small number of empirical research studies on occupational health and safety have been conducted in sub-Saharan Africa—specifically, Ghana, where majority of the citizens are engaged in jobs classified hazardous such as mining, quarrying, lumbering, farming, and fishing. Arguably, few studies have examined the relationship between occupational health and safety management and employee commitment, particularly in the mining industry. In the light of the provocative issues on the extraction of ore from the earth in recent times, this study sets out to investigate occupational health and safety management from the employees' perceptions and its implication on employees' attitude, specifically their commitment to the organization.

The subject of occupational health and safety management in the mining sector is on the rise because of the increasing demand for minerals and the high-risk factors associated with it. The case for employees and organizations is that, according to Demba et al [11], in developing nations, the rates of industrial and occupational injury-related deaths and disabilities are 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. This affects employees' attitudes and intentions toward their organization. Occupational health programs are thus primarily concerned with the prevention of ill health arising from workplace conditions, whereas safety programs deal with the prevention of accidents and with minimizing the resulting loss and damage to lives and properties [12]. Boyle [13] posits that the process of managing occupational health and safety is the same as other management activities, but the distinction lies in the complex nature of occupational health and safety. However, according to Cooper [14], the management of OSH is in many respect exactly the same as managing productivity or other functional areas of operations. This shows that the management of safety at the workplace is not just about prevention of repetitions of accidents that have already occurred but rather must be integrated into the general management system that relates to quality management and protection of the working person and the environment.

Hayes et al [15] proposed five constructs of assessing workplace safety. These authors are of the view that management commitment to safety, supervisors' safety practices, coworker safety practices, job safety, and safety programs are some of the critical issues that could be looked at in terms of safety at the workplace. Steenkamp and Van Schoor [16] rightfully mention that occupational health and safety is a complex international problem for management and society, and that it must always be a top management priority. Management commitment plays an important role in all aspects of safety intervention [16]. Management commitment to safety indicates the extent to which the organization's top management demonstrates positive and supportive safety attitudes toward their employees' safety [17]. Yule et al [18] noted that employees' perception of dedicated management's action to safety resulted in accident reduction. Ali et al [19] also argued that management safety practices as well as commitment to safety play an effective role in reducing workplace injuries. Geldart et al [20], in a study on Canadian manufacturing firms, also found that administrative policies, practices, and attitudes have a direct positive impact on safety in the workplace.

Additionally, supervisors are normally seen as one of the key element in health and safety management at the workplace in ensuring safety compliance and safety participation. In their study, Yule et al [18] noted that employees conformed to safety rules and procedures when they perceived that the action of their supervisor is fair and congruent with organization policy on safety. Supervisors' safety practices describe the extent to which a supervisor keeps track of unsafe practices as well as acknowledges the workers who adopt safe work behaviors. Another interesting element in health and safety management that could be used to increase safety performance at the workplace is coworker safety practices. Coworker safety concerns the extent to which workers perceive their colleagues as valuing safety. According to Ford and Tetrick [21], employee behaviors at work and personality variables contribute, directly or indirectly, to accidents. Safety behavior encompasses all activities undertaken by individuals in their workplace to ensure their personal safety, the safety of their coworkers, and the safety of their organization at large. Ford and Tetrick [21] asserted that workers' safety-oriented behavior can be scaled by the extent to which they engage in actions that promote safety and avoid those that decrease safety.

Job safety shows the extent to which job duties do not pose threats or unhealthy consequence(s) on the health and safety of employees. According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration [22], job safety analysis is a technique that focuses on job tasks as a way to identify hazards before they occur. It focuses on the relationship between the worker, the task, the tools, and the work environment. Gyekye [2] explains job safety as a measure of the degree of safety inherent in a job assignment. Job safety looks at how employees are well informed on hazards and risk associated with job description and measures implemented to curtail or eradicate those hazards and risk. Health and safety programs consist of clearly defined actions to implement the health and safety training and policies. Safety training and safety policies are essential determinants of safety performance. Safety training is defined as the knowledge of safety given to employees in order for them to work safely and with no danger to their well-being [23]. Likewise, Lin and Mills [24] found that clear policy statements and safety training played an important role in reducing accident rates. Earlier studies indicated a link between safety training and increased safety performance [25]. Consequently, effective training assists workers to have a sense of belonging and thus, be more accountable for safety in their workplace. In addition, Vassie and Lucas [26] indicated that safety programs are crucial to all workers and an important aspect of effective health and safety management.

Commitment is one of the job-related attitudes that has received extensive attention from researchers around the globe. Organizational commitment is an individual's attitude and attachment toward his or her organization [27]. Miller (reference [28], p. 73) defines organizational commitment as the "state in which an employee identifies with a particular organization and its goals, and wishes to maintain membership in the organization." Organizational commitment is therefore the degree to which an employee is willing to maintain membership because of interest and association with the organization's goals and values. To Cohen (reference [29], p. xi), "commitment is a force that binds an individual to a course of action of relevance to one or more targets." Arnold [30] extended Cohen's [29] definition of commitment to the organization, and suggested that organizational commitment is the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in an organization.

Organizational commitment has traditionally been measured as a unidimensional construct [31,32]. However, Meyer and Allen [33] identified three forms of organizational commitment. According to

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