

# Communication's Role in Safety Management and Performance for the Road Safety Practices

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## **ABSTRACT**

Communication among organizations could play an important role in increasing road safety. To get in-depth knowledge of its role, this study measured managers' and employees' perceptions of the communication's role on six safety management and performance criteria for road safety practices by conducting a survey using a questionnaire among 165 employees and 135 managers. Path analysis using AMOS-19 software shows that some of the safety management road safety practices have high correlation with the safety performance, namely, from the six antecedents, only the safety training and safety promotion, closely correlate with the safety motivation, and only safety commitment, safety communication and feedback have close relations with the safety knowledge and safety behavior compliance, and only safety feedback has effective relations with the safety participation. Safety feedback is identified as the most important safety management issue to road safety practices and it would predict the level of safety knowledge, safety motivation, safety compliance and safety participation. The results of this study would help the concerned agencies/orgaizations in improving their ability to assess the road safety indicators and to the future development of the safety performance management for road safety practices in these agencies.

**Key Words:** Safety communication; Safety performance; Safety management; Safety behavior; Road safety practices

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Despite continuing efforts to reduce the number of work-related accidents, every year thousands of workers die at their workplaces and millions suffer occupational injuries and illnesses (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics [1, 2]. In fact, there were 1178 fatal work injuries in the United States (U.S.) construction industry sector in 2007 [3]. Furthermore, the costs associated with injuries in the U.S. construction industry have

been estimated to exceed 10 billion dollars per year [4]. Over the past few years, the road crashes are one of the most important problems faced by many organizations in several countries.

This raises many questions about the way in which safety management is handled in countries like France, the statistics of road crashes (French Interior Ministry, 2009); revealed a number of 53 014 road crashes, 1997 people that lost their lives, 44 109 were injured and 16 173 hospitalized. According to these statistics, what can companies do to maintain the employees' safety?

According to the manual [5], road safety communication campaigns aim at:

- Providing information regarding new or modified legislation.
- Increasing knowledge and awareness as concerns the impact of new technology, equipment, as well as behavior on the road and associated risks.
- Changing the parameters that have been proven scientifically or empirically that affect road user behavior [6].
- Attempting at changing inappropriate behavior that increases risk or retaining behavior that promotes safety.
- Contributing to the reduction of the frequency of road accidents and the minimization of the severity of their impacts.

In fact, researchers and practitioners have gradually recognized the importance of organizational factors, such as safety climate, for safety performance in the construction industry [7]. Most of the authors [8, 9, 10] who studied the accident unanimously agreed that programmes and policies for managing safety in workplace in major accident hazard process industries in countries are clearly inadequate and require modification. The communication in organizations is used as a rather efficient strategy to approach the wide audience in terms of promoting road safety, improving driving behavior and contributing to less road accidents, injuries and fatalities [11, 12]. Research in the area of road safety became prominent during the past three decades. Its primary objective is to predict safety related outcomes such as accidents and injuries in order to provide valuable guidance for improving safety in organizations. This requires extensive knowledge, not only about the various aspects that influence safety, but also as to how this influence occurs. The fact that organizational and social factors do influence safety performance led to extensive research in the field of safety culture and safety climate [13, 14–22].

[23] took safety climate as a single factor containing management values, communication, training, and safety systems and studied the mediating role of safety knowledge and motivation on the relationship between safety climate and safety behavior. [24] operationalized perceived safety climate as management commitment, supervisor support, co-worker support employee participation, and competence level in the study looking for mediators in safety climate safety performance relationship. [25] included management commitment To safety, return to work practices, post-injury administration and safety training as the constituents of safety climate while analyzing the mediating role of safety control of the relationship between safety climate and safety performance. [26] took safety attitudes and communication as the factors in safety climate while assessing the mediating role of psychological strain in the safety climate

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