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Pros And Cons Of Occupational Health And Safety In The Manufacturing Sector: An Empirical Exploration

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Abstract

This paper adopts a qualitative study of occupational health and safety (OHS) to elucidate its pros and cons within the manufacturing industry. It is based on the premise that there has been so much discussed in the literature concerning the theme with very little to no existence that bothers on issues such as occupational health and safety practices in Nigeria, what constitutes the current or emergent issues on the theme concerning developing countries. Furthermore, it probed whether safety can be guaranteed within the manufacturing sector, while also evaluating the debates on the way forward and extent of applicability in the Nigeria context. The qualitative analysis was done using the thematic analytical approach, thus, relying on the responses gathered through interviews for its inference-making to arrive at the study's findings. It, therefore, concludes that while it is legally required for all stakeholders to contribute to OHS, it is also morally right to follow practices that advance safety in general.

Keywords: *Emerging issues, Health and safety, Manufacturing sector, Nigeria, Safety practices.*

1. INTRODUCTION

There are serious, far-reaching consequences when the Occupational Health and Safety Act is violated. OHS infractions have been shown to have costly human and financial repercussions on companies, workers, and society as a whole (Monyei, Arachie & Ukpere, 2023a; Barati Jozan, Ghorbani, Khalid et al., 2023). Employers are impacted in a cascade manner by the negative consequences of safety violations because violations result in higher production costs, staff absenteeism, and production disruptions, and they have a negative influence on a company's profitability. According to Orazulike (2016), it may also result in lower production, increased retraining expenses, and possibility of restaffing. Additionally, a range of financial expenses are likely to be incurred by organisations, including decreased competitiveness, increased litigation, missed deadlines, missed targets, missed business time, lost customers, and damaged reputations (Barati Jozan et al., 2023; Hedlund, Gummesson, Rydell, & Andersson, 2016). In the worst situation, businesses may dissolve as a result. Syed-Yahya et al. (2022) state that safety failures have a profound effect on workers, resulting in unspeakable pain or adversity for those affected. Hedlund et al. (2016) suggest that the consequences of this phenomenon may vary in severity and worse quality of life, as well as early retirement. Not only that, but it aggravates several health issues connected to the job that some people may carry into retirement. Due in large part to the fact that many of these individuals are breadwinners, families and friends of the

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impacted workers suffer unspeakable social and economic challenges (Salminen & Seo, 2015). Not only can occupational incidents be extremely dangerous for people's lives and property in many nations, but they can also have a very negative humanitarian and multifaceted economic impact on governments, the environment, and society at large (Jilcha et al., 2016; Marchiori, Albano, & Barbini, 2013; Orazulike, 2016; Salminen & Seo, 2015). Documents revealed that insufficient protocols for occupational health and safety caused economic damages amounting to 4% of the global gross domestic product. According to the ILO (2016), work-related illnesses and accidents cost the economy $2.8 trillion annually in direct and indirect costs. These expenses consist of lost wages, medical expenses, property damage, compensation, and training for new hires. According to Harms-Ringdahl (2003), the yearly expenditure on personnel, supplies, machinery, and lost time exceeds $5 million. The cause of 0.9 million disability-adjusted life years (DALYs), or 2.5% of all DALYs globally, was occupational risk factors. A loss of 3.5 years of healthy life is incurred by every 1,000 employees globally due to work-related injuries, which account for around 10.5 million DALYs, both fatal and non-fatal (ILO, 2016). 8.8% of deaths worldwide are accounted for by this. Furthermore, stress leads to health problems for both employees' physical and emotional well-being, and some of them cannot afford the therapies that would improve their quality of life. Since OHS is concerned with the overall well-being of workers in terms of their physical and mental health, as well as their productivity at work, any violation of health and safety regulations can have a substantial negative impact on the operation of the company. Amponsah-Tawiah and Mensah (2016) discovered that workers' attitudes and intents towards their organisation are influenced by ongoing exposure to work-related injury. Researchers have shown a direct link between OHS management and employees' emotional organisational commitment. According to Amponsah-Tawiah & Mensah (2016), employees who have a positive perception of safety and health management at work are more likely to identify and feel an emotional bond with the company. OHS conditions in the majority of organisations have improved dramatically in recent years due to the global occurrence of serious workplace accidents (Haslam, Haefeli, & Haslam, 2010; Samanta & Gochhayat, 2023). An estimated 2.3 million people are affected by industrial accidents each year, according to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), which keeps track of occupational health and safety throughout the world. In addition, illnesses or injuries received at work may cause about 750,000 people, or three-quarters of a million, to miss work (ILO, 2016). Several employees have been obliged to resign from their positions due to either a temporary or permanent impairment. Furthermore, the episodes have had negative financial effects. For example, the estimated cost of 5-7% of all reported deaths in developed economies (mostly from work-related illnesses and injuries) is close to 1.8%–6% of GDP (Barbaranelli, Petitta, & Probst, 2015; Takala, Hämäläinen, Saarela et al., 2014; WHO, 2007). This cost is estimated to be approximately US$2.8 trillion (about 2.1 trillion Euros) to the global economy, as cited in other reports (ILO, 2016). However, given that occurrences are typically either underreported or incorrectly documented, these figures represent simply a tip of the iceberg. This worrying trend is expected to make occupational accidents and injuries the second biggest cause of death globally by 2020, overtaking natural causes of mortality (Gyekye, 2006). These occurrences also directly harm people's employment, relationships with friends and family, the government, and the environment (Kumie, Amera, Berhane et al., 2016; Vuorio, Rantonen, Johnson, et al., 2014). So, it is astounding that workplace safety practices are still disorganised in many countries despite the consequences, and that accidents and other work-related injuries continue to be common across all industries. Based on incident reports, it can strongly be argued that workplaces are the source of essential aspects that often degrade safety (Yorio & Wachter, 2014). The sources include apathy towards safety, a lack of knowledge about safety, inadequate safe work processes, and management errors. This emphasises how important it is to manage workplace health and safety in addition to these specific incidents. The issue is made worse by workers' apathy (Vuorio et al., 2014; Adeogun & Okafor, 2013; Oyelohunnu, 2009) and overall workplace safety perspectives that depict safety as an impossibility. Recurring events therefore call into question the validity of management's duty to provide a safe workplace. Furthermore, they highlight their managerial strategies, which can point to a lack of

leadership in the field of occupational safety, and they scrutinise management safety values in the employment relations area. Interestingly, OHS management seems to be getting harder in developing countries, especially in different industrial sectors, while developed economies are still pushing for improvements in workplace safety at all costs (Abubakar, 2015). This seems to be the case in these countries, where perceptions of safety are based on ideas that impede reaching a zero-risk tolerance. According to Lewis-Beck and Alford (1980), workplace mishaps necessitate further investigation into the country's safety regulations, laws, and policies. This could lead to the identification of new federal initiatives. For the fact that it appears that ongoing delays and shortcomings undermine and render ineffective present measures to resolve OHS issues, the call for action is imperative. For this reason, a study on workplace safety and leadership is necessary to comprehend OHS issues in emerging nations, considering these facets of OHS management. Furthermore, this will assist in fulfilling the necessary steps to encourage the creation and implementation of effective human resource management (HRM) practices, with safety in mind, in these countries, which are necessary countermeasures to risky organisational behaviour.

1.1. Research Objective

To elucidate the pros and cons of occupational health and safety in Nigeria’s manufacturing sector.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Concerns Regarding Safety and Health Practices in Nigerian Work Environment

With OHS methods that mimic well-known safety issues, Nigeria is one of the most significant developing nations, particularly in the West African sub-region. Nigeria's Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) has been identified by scholars as having several issues, such as ineffective safety and health acts and related legislation, a lack of administrative and financial resources, data that is useless for establishing improvements, and a general lack of interest on the part of employers and employees towards safety standards (Abubakar, 2015; Adeogun & Okafor, 2013; Idoro, 2011). Research indicates that a significant number of Nigerian organisations still do not prioritise safety, except for a few large international corporations that adhere to the safety cultures of their home nations. Nigerian employers and contractors often exhibit poor OHS performance and efforts, which is generally indicative of apathy and indifference to workplace safety (Idoro, 2011). Even if several businesses violate workplace safety regulations, it can be challenging to convict or appropriately penalise them due to their influential status as members of the political elite or their allies. Therefore, putting these business owners under the proper control could be extremely dangerous for safety inspectors who are adamant about following rules as written (Okojie, 2010). Research reveals that the majority of national legislation in place today is out of date and insufficiently effective to significantly impact safety performance. Nevertheless, particular safety precautions—such as factory inspections to strengthen regulations—are typically ineffective. Nigerian workplaces that are not yet covered by OHS legislation are growing in number due to the country's current economic climate, while the number of those that were previously recognised is still declining (Umeokafor et al., 2014; Adeogun & Okafor, 2013; Idoro, 2011). Because of this system's weakness, industry safety practices remain subpar, making it difficult to recognise potential hazards and exert control over them. One typical area that has been severely damaged by unsettling OHS issues is Nigeria's manufacturing sector. The nature of the work or manufacturing processes in this industry exposes workers to several safety concerns (Nordlöf, Wiitavaara, Winblad, Wijk, & Westerling, 2015; Salminen & Seo,

2015). Additionally, rising stress levels and job dissatisfaction further compound these risks (Tadesse & Kumie, 2007). Its degree of vulnerability has also been influenced by the dubious organisational cultures that now prevail in the majority of these sectors. This is because an organization's current organisational culture has a significant impact on how well safety protocols and laws are implemented there (Turtiainen & Vaananen, 2012). Similar to other industries, manufacturing has historically had a high rate of employee injury. This is because most manufacturing companies use young labour, manual production methods, antiquated machinery, and work arrangements (like contract and casual work) that may lessen the obligations of the employer towards their employees (Salminen & Seo, 2015). Reports have shown that industries with youthful workers, inexperienced staff, manual manufacturing methods, and antiquated machinery are likely to have a higher risk of injury (Akinkunmi, 2016). The reality that most manufacturing companies are small, many, and dispersed geographically presents another significant challenge to manufacturing safety: conducting efficient government safety inspections to address potential safety issues is unfeasible. Therefore, this position may suggest that OHS is more of a personal duty to safety for this industry (Schultz, 2007), which in Nigeria's case seems to be impractical.

2.2 OHS Concerns: Current and Emerging Issues in Developing Nations

Currently, it is believed that there are 2.8 billion people in the world's labour. These employees spend roughly one-third of their lives at work. According to research, however, many jobs have not only left employees unhappy and stressed out, but have also put them at risk for health problems both during and after their active duty (Monyei, Aiyelabegun, Kelvin-Iloafu & Ukpere, 2023b; Ahmad, Sattar, & Nawaz, 2016). Several things compromise workers' health and safety. Despite the complexity of the issues at play, globalisation, fast industrial growth, and technological development are important elements that have led to the exposure of a wide range of workers to different risks throughout production or service delivery. Therefore, the importance of implementing appropriate occupational health and safety protocols cannot be emphasised. The goal of OHS is to minimise and protect injuries to employees and other people who come into contact with the workplace. The goal is to fully take into account all factors that affect employee safety and health in the workplace to anticipate, identify, assess, and manage possible hazards (Mostafa & Momen, 2014). As a result, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has created an all-inclusive universal strategy to protect the health of workers that takes into account every aspect of their lives, including disease and physical injury, social and personal determinants, and access to healthcare services (WHO, 2007). OHS goals have been established by the WHO and ILO for the social, mental, and physical health of workers in all professions (ILO, 2016). Additionally, directives are offered to reduce the frequency of occupational illnesses and potential hazards arising from work-related situations, in addition to ensuring that the workplace environment is appropriate for employees' physiological and psychological needs (Ahmad, Hussain, Saleem et al., 2015). Despite the robust rules of these safety watchdogs, OHS is still a relatively new field in developing nations (Kuranchie-Mensah and Amponsah-Tawiah, 2016). The fact that work practices are typically far below minimum standards raises serious concerns about the necessity of preventative safety measures, even though the hazardous working conditions in several of their workstations have put the lives of employees in jeopardy (Salminen & Seo, 2015; Pingle, 2012). Studies have confirmed that rich countries' safety measures differ significantly from those of developing nations, which house the majority of the world's labour force (Khan, 2013). Reports state that although a number of these nations are working to remain relevant in the globalisation of commerce and manufacturing, their OHS policies do not match this goal. The literature suggests that this is most likely due to their incomplete awareness of workplace dangers. Less than 10% of the working population is covered by OHS rules, in addition to the complexities related to OHS in this field. Additionally, according to Jilcha et al. (2016), between five and ten per cent of those

workers receive health and safety services tailored to their particular line of work. Because occupational health and primary health care are not well integrated, many of its employees do not have sufficient access to basic health services. Different categories of hazards and work risks exist in workplaces, and the majority of conventional safety regulations are either disregarded, carried out carelessly, or not implemented at all (Ahmad et al., 2015). Furthermore, even while many nations have put in place health and safety laws to safeguard employees, the lack of sufficient enforcement mechanisms typically makes it difficult to put these laws into practice (Umeokafor, Evaggelinos, Lundy et al., 2014).
Similarly, a high rate of poverty, illiteracy, an increasing number of substandard industries, training gaps, a lack of motivation, a poor safety culture, a lack of trustworthy OHS data, limited unionisation, inadequate legislative measures, the application of current laws, and a general lack of interest among stakeholders all contribute to the low status of OHS in the region (Khan, 2013; Morantz, 2013). However, the lack of funding, technical know-how, and worker ignorance and apathy have resulted in virtually no pressure on governments to enact more occupational health and safety legislation, implement necessary reforms, or even enforce those that do exist (Joubert, 2002). Joubert (2002) asserts that despite this, it is doubtful that people in underdeveloped nations will demand reforms because they are frequently ignorant of the risks involved with their jobs.

As earlier researchers have demonstrated many years ago (Chew, 1988), expected in-plant safety operations remain woefully inadequate in many organisations (Ahmad et al., 2015). Given that many businesses do not have the necessary components for a standard safety management system, this claim is well-founded. For instance, many industries do not have a dedicated safety department as part of their basic management responsibilities, and some lack qualified safety officers and safety committees. Apart from the dearth of individuals skilled in Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) matters, it seems that HR managers do not acknowledge safety as a primary responsibility (Pingle, 2012; Wang & Tao, 2012). Traditional safety initiatives, like as safety posters, bulletins, PPE use, and other promotional tools, are frequently ridiculed despite these failures, and safety precautions are not implemented properly. Therefore, it is concerning that the safety situation in developing nations seems to be reminiscent of a well-known safety authority's observation from the 1990s, despite recent affirmations that the majority of recurrent workplace safety issues are preventable (Alfers et al., 2016; Abubakar, 2015; ILO, 2016). "We have no idea what is safe, what is effective, or even what employers and employees believe to be safe" (Chew, 1988).

2.3. Safety within the Manufacturing Sector

Jobs in manufacturing, mining, construction, and railroads are some of the riskiest and most challenging. But manufacturing is a vital sector where workers are exposed to a lot of risks, which can lead to a variety of workplace injuries and property damage (Akinkunmi, 2016; WHO, 2007). The industry's inadequate safety performance is typically attributed to progressively deteriorating working conditions that provide dangers to ergonomic safety (ILO, 2016). Previous research has emphasised the traits of this industry that make it vulnerable to safety defects. For example, due to the hazardous nature of the tasks, the industry is prone to safety events since inadequate employment and working conditions are the main causes of occupational injuries or health hazards. Furthermore, several industries lack clear, dependable, or efficient risk-prevention plans to deal with the problems that arise.

All organisations are vulnerable to some level of risk, but the manufacturing sector has more significant or frequent accidents due in large part to the large number of medium- and even smaller-scale enterprises that make up its membership, particularly in developing nations (Adeyemi et al., 2016). OHS is challenging to adopt in smaller businesses because they lack the necessary frameworks for an efficient OHS system. OHS is not effectively

recorded and is not prioritised in the majority of these businesses. On the other hand, the prevalent practice of not disclosing OHS issues hinders their capacity to evaluate the seriousness of the risk and to set up appropriate monitoring protocols. This industry's high accident rate is inevitable due to shaky OHS systems and careless OHS setups.

Apart from the distinct approaches taken in the manufacturing industry to safety, their impromptu reactions to safety frequently stem from a misinterpretation of the fundamentals of safety. OHS may not be entirely foreign to some of these businesses, it is maintained, but the majority of stakeholders—employers and employees—continue to believe that accidents are either uncommon or not very significant (Monyei et al., 2023b;

Geldart et al., 2010). While several businesses have admitted that worker safety is a priority, it remains dubious if following conventional safety procedures is considered a must for employment. Many willing companies run into problems because they don't know how to comply with safety regulations, don't grasp them, or don't use the right preventive strategy. Safety events continue to raise concerns about the quantity and effectiveness of safety resources, even in major organisations that are perceived to be more safety-conscious and to have high OHS performance. Amazingly, larger corporations are realising how important it is to safeguard worker safety, yet contrary to expectations, this has the opposite effect and does not improve workplace OHS procedures. Given that some businesses continue to evade the law and pay fines that are disproportionate to the safety violation, it appears that the law does not influence how businesses handle OHS. They are also renowned for their ability to adjust fast, particularly in the event of an accident (Akinkunmi, 2016).

Most components of the OHS system are absent from the Nigerian industrial sector (Akinkunmi, 2016). Even though the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) was passed more than thirty years ago and mandates that manufacturing industry organisations employing more than twenty people set up a health and safety committee (HSC), the majority of Nigerian workplaces still find it difficult to put this crucial safety measure into practice (Umeokafor et al., 2014). In areas where it exists, bad employer-employee relations, communication problems, and the media cause it to be dormant for years. As prior research has shown, the manufacturing sector is still a vital component of the economy, has daily accidents, and requires immediate development (Otitolaiye, 2019; Okon, & Osesie, 2017). Consequently, even though industries are inherently linked to safety flaws, the degree of safety lapses in Nigeria's manufacturing sector makes it necessary to concentrate research efforts there, taking into account their potential contribution to the desired economic growth. Ensuring worker safety is getting more difficult globally, despite the safety concerns in the manufacturing sectors of developing nations such as Nigeria. For example, the following section gives a brief synopsis of international safety practices and management systems.

2.4. Debates on the Way Forward and Extent of Applicability in Nigeria

Scholars in the field have confirmed that the sustainability of improving safety performance may be achieved through the creation of a robust and positive safety culture as well as by the management of the human resource component of the company's resources (Monyei et al., 2023b; Chen, McCabe, & Hyatt, 2017). In addition to criticising the safety culture that currently exists in the majority of businesses, works conducted in Nigeria have revealed that the HRM system in that nation is still in its infancy. It has been proposed that, in contrast to the status of management practices in the nation, organisations should use globally standardised HRM practices to engage in proper management practices. These practices are particularly applicable to the needs of workers in various jobs and align with the demands of global market expansion (Fajana, Owoyemi, Elegbede, & Gbajumo-Sheriff, 2011; Linus, 2015; Anyim, Ikemefuna, & Mbah, 2011). Current study indicates that HRM procedures can improve workers' attitudes, behaviours, and knowledge. These procedures

boost motivation, cooperation, and dedication, which improves their ability to give the business a long-term competitive advantage and aid in the accomplishment of organisational goals (Subramaniam et al., 2016). This is because these actions foster an environment that encourages workers to actively and highly engage in the objectives of the company (Bal, Bozkurt, & Ertemsir, 2013). Even though HRM practices are important for different kinds of performances (employee or organisational), the system still needs to be tailored to the particular needs of the users and the particularities of the industries. According to Subramaniam et al. (2016) and Bal et al. (2013), the effectiveness of HRM practices is also related to the organization's approach, design, and implementation, as well as the satisfaction of employees with HR practices. Accordingly, it may be necessary to put in more effort to identify the best kinds of procedures to manage safety concerns in the manufacturing industries and to choose the appropriate safety precautions. A few studies have been conducted to better understand OHS in the African context, even though there are several OHS studies on developing nations (Kuranchie-Mensah & Amponsah-Tawiah, 2016; Takala et al., 2014; Zanko & Dawson, 2012; Vinodkumar & Bhasi, 2010). Comparably, there are still few OHS studies conducted in Nigeria (Ogbonna, Ezenekwe, Uzodinma et al., 2016; Adeogun & Okafor, 2013; Okojie, 2010). Research studies on OHS problems from underdeveloped nations are often few, according to the literature, which acknowledges this situation (Barati Jozan, Ghorbani, Khalid et al., 2023; Syed-Yahya et al., 2022). It also backs up arguments that management studies haven't done enough research on workplace safety issues, which calls for more studies on the topic, particularly empirical ones (Harris, Cortvriend, & Hyde, 2007; Barling & Hutchinson, 2000). Furthermore, although research indicates that HRM practices are relevant for enhancing OHS, there is a dearth of empirical data on such practices in Nigeria, particularly in the manufacturing sector (Umoh & Torbira, 2013; Adebiyi & Ajimotokan, 2010; Adebiyi et al., 2009). This assertion is supported by data showing that the corpus of research on HR practices is quite small, with less than 1% of all studies (Barati Jozan, Ghorbani, Khalid et al., 2023; Syed-Yahya et al., 2022). The present investigation was founded upon the discovered gaps.

3. MATERIALS AND METHOD

This section presents the qualitative phase of the study, in which data was gathered through an in-depth and well-structured interview guide. A total of 18 participants, representing major stakeholders and staff members of the selected manufacturing sector in Nigeria were engaged in the interview discussion. These participants were drawn to include three (3) Staff representatives, one (1) Staff Nurse, one (1) Linesman, two (2) Supervisors, and one (1) Production manager. Also included are three (3) Safety officials, four (4) Top management representatives, one (1) member from the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (M.A.N.), and two (2) Government representatives.

The questions put to these respondents were structured in line with the research theme which probed their knowledge, and perceptions about OHS, its pros and cons within the firm and country of operations. The responses were recorded on a mobile device (Phone). Consequently, in addition to the interview sessions, field notes and observations of the responses obtained were equally considered in the analysis to provide detailed information. In analysing the obtained data, the qualitative analysis was conducted by using the Thematic Analytical Approach.

3.1. Procedures for the Qualitative Data Analysis

The recorded interviews were manually translated into written text immediately after each session. This was done to ensure an appropriate reflective process of the obtained data. This reflecting process was continued until the interview portions that followed could no longer add any new information, known as the saturation point. The complete set of interview data

was manually transcribed using intelligent transcription in advance of the study, excluding status, filler words, and pauses. To make the content easier to read and understand, it was then modified and tidied up. Also, each participant is given a pseudo-name to conceal their identities while presenting the findings. As such, code "**SN** " denotes Staff Nurse; Supervisors are represented by "**SP1**" and "**SP2**"; Safety Officials are "**SO1**", "**SO2**" and "**SO3**"; Safety Managers with "**SM**"; Production Manager – "**PM**"; Government representatives "**GTR1**" and "**GTR2**"; M.A.N. member "**MM**"; Staff – "**ST1**", "**ST2**", and "**ST3**"; Top management with "**TM1**", "**TM2**", "**TM3**" and "**TM4**"; and Linesman – "**LM**". The number against the codes is an indication of participants' line-up during the interviews, that is, 1 represents the first interviewee in a specific group and 2 the second participant, respectively. At the end of the transcription exercise, the analysis process began with familiarising itself with the data by repeatedly reading the complete transcripts to make sense of the data and for better understanding. Thereafter, each of the transcripts was indexed by creating initial labels for the relevant pieces from the texts. This process of qualitative coding allows for a system of orderly, organised, and rigorous analysis of transcriptions. It also makes it easier to find relevant quotes or pieces of information that could be organised by patterns and themes. Like this procedure, the data was equally captured with vivo coding, where the initial codes are derived from the participants' literal words, while the mapped-out codes represent the participants' perspectives. This was done by observing relevant words, phrases, sentences, and comments in the data in response to the probed questions. The participants' sentences were read line by line concerning the specific questions, and then each of the observed segments was descriptively summarised using open coding. In addition, the coding procedure combined the use of deductive and inductive coding frameworks. Some codes were deductively generated via a specific set of Apriori codes (formulated from the research themes) to generate additional codes. Some codes were equally developed from segments of the data containing pieces of information that capture important things about the whole research theme (inductive coding). Subsequently, the coded data was reviewed by re-reading the transcripts to ensure that the most important codes from the participants' responses had been created. Then, the codes were collated to establish categories or groups from which themes were further developed. The relationships between the derived themes were further defined using selective coding to ensure that the themes answered the research objective. Therefore, when presenting the narratives, the themes that emerge are reinforced with participant quotes taken verbatim. Triangulation is also used, combining data from the field notes and the open-ended sections of the questionnaire to provide comprehensive information. The interpretation of the data was done by the goal of the study.

4. QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSES

4.1. Participants' Knowledge of Occupational Health and Safety

To effectively elucidate participants' knowledge of the research theme, it was pertinent to ascertain the extent to which they understand the subject matter and what it entails. Hence, participants' knowledge was assessed with the question below:

What do you understand by the term occupational safety and health?"

In response to the question, the main theme of the participants' answers was that OHS was linked to "total freedom" when it came to any kind of damage caused by work such as injuries, illness, incapacity, and death. Also, other indications alluded to OHS as an "act of protection and commendable work practises", and "work norms", in terms of harmless work interactions, people's security, and maintaining a quality environment, respectively. In the words of participant **SM1**, who has been a safety manager for 15 years, it implies freedom from any form of danger and upholding good health. In this regard, he noted: *"Safety simply deals with three issues: (1) it symbolizes the freedom from injuries and major accident at*

the workplace. (2) It is about ensuring and maintaining good health which encompasses the social and physical wellbeing of an individual. (3) It also speaks to the environmental aspect which has to do with the total work surroundings". Several of the participants (**PM**, **LM**, **ST1**, & **SN**) indicated that practising safety at work entails ensuring that all the people interacting with the work environment are prevented from injuries and fatal accidents that could endanger their lives, health or even destroy the serenity of the work environment. Besides, nearly all the respondents agreed that the matter of safety is essential for productivity and must be a value that is passionately embraced and pursued by all stakeholders. Nevertheless, some of the participants expressed great displeasure with the state of OHS in the country. An example of such discontent was indicated in the words of a safety official (SO2): "…*Nigeria is not just yet serious with safety, otherwise, by now OHS would have been considered a necessary act to be engaged in, a serious norm to be embraced and pursued. However, what we see is unnecessary spending on programmes which hold no water... just words"*. In essence, the above responses demonstrate participants' insights of what occupational safety denotes and it shows that they are acquainted with some of its basic concepts. In their views, OHS is recognised as a work norm and is an act of maintaining freedom from anything that could cause ill health, damages, or death to anyone interacting with the workplace (employees, employers, contractors, visitors, etc.). Besides, it is considered a necessity and an act that should be valued. Therefore, with evidence establishing a level of support for the knowledge of OHS, the investigation probed further into ascertaining the level at which the professed knowledge is utilised. This information is particularly important to place existing claims about the state of safety in developing countries into perspective while verifying the reasons for participants' expressed dissatisfaction with OHS practices. This information was explored by investigating the extent to which safety and its contents are embraced and addressed in the country, especially among the economy's manufacturing sectors. The engaged questions that provided evidence for these explorations are presented next. The analysis began with inquiries concerning general perceptions of the state of workplace safety.

4.2. Status of Nigeria's Manufacturing Industry Safety

The current state of OHS in the country was assessed by investigating participants' perceptions of general OHS practices, based on their knowledge and general understanding of OHS. Hence, participants were requested to respond to the following questions:

"Given your knowledge of OHS, how would you describe the state of OHS in Nigeria's manufacturing workplaces?"

All 18 interviewees responded using words that resonated with their experiences with safety practices in the country. While they all acknowledged that a lot still needs to be done to achieve laudable safety standards, there were mixed opinions about the actual state of safety. The descriptive words ranged from "picking up", and "improving" to "problematic", "evidently poor", "appalling" and the like. For instance, participants in the top management and government representative's groups expressed that, unlike what it used to be, notable safety improvement has been achieved in some states and is ongoing in several other states. However, it was equally disclosed that most of the offered safety efforts are being frustrated by employees' uncooperative attitude and management lapses. In this vein, TM1 said: "I can say that though safety practices in Nigeria are improving gradually, and people's responses to safety are getting better by the day, it is still an ongoing process with much room for improvement. This is major because while companies are trying hard to promote safe work practices, there are still several others dodging it". Refuting this claim, participants in the staff representative group shared a different view, alluding to the non-standard nature of safety practices in the country. In their descriptions, metaphors like "problematic', 'seriously challenged', 'evidently poor', 'far away from reality', 'full of

empty words', 'appalling safety culture', 'having the resemblance of the Dead Sea', 'second-hand issue', and 'filled with safety underperformances', and so on, were engaged indicators of the current safety status in the country. For instance, the production manager (PM) who has been in the production unit for 15 years, had this to say: "The safety culture is appalling, and we are far away from reaching the expected stage even within the industries in Nigeria, especially amongst the manufacturing sectors. There is no doubt that there is ongoing awareness, but for the most time, what we have had thus far are empty talks filled with so much noise. Since safety involves lots of money to get things going, the progress so far has been very slow". Similarly, the Linesman (LM), with 16 years of working experience, indicated: "The level of safety within the manufacturing sector in Nigeria is still poor majorly because of general negative safety attitudes. It is like pouring resources into a dead sea, which continues taking good things in but would not flow. A lot of employees are defiant, several industries deliberately flout safety guidelines, and several managements are not ready to practice all the requirements for one reason or the other. This has been a common practice because the existing government agencies are not enough to go around to check these companies". SP2, a supervisor with 10 years of service in the sector, did not only agree with the other's perspectives on the poor state of safety but attributed safety failures status to safety underperformances in terms of neglect, display of false safety acts, misinformation, incomplete and biased information, hearsays, and management ineptitude. In this regard, he stated: "The situation of safety is disheartening in this country. Workplace incidents are surely bound to happen if things are not done the right way anywhere. If one looks closely at how things are done in developing countries for which Nigeria is an example, it is obvious that there is gross neglect of the right safety practices at work or people failing to embrace the real safe work acts. While we have various categories of workers, many of the workers are not conversant with what safety is and what it entails. Although there is some information spread here and there, people are fed with incomplete information and work with second-hand information. While, to several employers, it is all good as long as work done progresses". Participant in the SO group described the situation as problematic because while the practice was effectively performed in a few states, several others continuously compromised the rules and in turn attributed their failures to poor perceptions. Furthermore, a staff member in the category (ST2), who has also served as a safety officer currently in a manufacturing company for 10 years, attributed safety failures to industrial capacity. On that note, he posited: "In most of the manufacturing industries in Nigeria, particularly the small factories, safety is not taken as something important or possible to achieve. For example, my company had been in existence for some years now with safety on our policy, but the issue of safety was not taken seriously until a few years back when we started having serious injuries, different cases of near misses and lost time accidents, where people are badly injured". In essence, the above-highlighted viewpoints provide evidence, which supports that workplace injuries, near misses and accidents still occur in Nigeria, which, according to participants, could have been avoided if the right safety practices were put in place. More importantly, some of the participants mentioned factors that exacerbate the substandard state of safety in the country. They claimed that the state of safety in the country is wrapped around perpetual wrong deeds and incomplete practices. The highlighted issues are negligence, falsehood, misconduct, paucity or incompleteness of information, deliberate disobedience, reluctance, negative attitudes, and a blame-shifting syndrome, amongst others.

4.3 Observations from the Field Notes

Information obtained from the field notes is represented in this section. Foremost, a key observation is that while some of the understudied manufacturing firms welcomed the idea of safety discussions, others were not eager to disclose any information beyond the basics once the recordings stated. Also, some of the participants partially commented on some questions during the recording, but willingly stated 'off record' to other information. For example, a staff member (**ST1**) anxiously demanded to know if the researcher would

release a copy of the audio recordings to the management despite the participant being reassured of the anonymity and confidentiality of his responses. There was a long pause while looking at the researcher and when he finally agreed, he continued to motion with his fingers to pause the recordings for more information on any question that he felt needed emphasis or clarity. Another participant (**ST3**) only gave more information outside the office space as he remarked: "*Talking about safety issues is not encouraged here! Don't be deceived by the warm welcome of the manager*!" One of the participants (**SO2**) appeared to be the most outspoken. He motioned for the researcher to take a seat in his office after which he said: "S*ince you are doing this research for a useful purpose, I am ready to supply you with as much information as I have, perhaps, the findings would get to the right place someday and bring improvement that would help the future of this country"*. Nonetheless, the required information was gathered. For example, **ST2** declared his observation, saying: "*Though management is showing concerns about safe work practices, some of the supervisors hide the true situations from management. Here are the reasons why I said that. We do not have enough safety gadgets around here, several of us wore outmoded or inappropriate safety boots, while the earplugs were substandard. Some of the gadgets have been used for several years and never replaced. The supervisor says once they are not torn such gadgets are still good for use" (laughing sarcastically*)". He continued by stating: *"Yet once the top management comes around the factory and asks if everything is okay. The supervisors always say* (raising his two hands in anger), that "*everything is under control"* (nodding his head pitifully*). Apparently, they must have been given money to procure those items but mismanaged the funds*" (he said mockingly with a contemptuous snort). One of the top management representatives (**TM2**) expressed his concerns in this regard. He indicated: "*Safety is not what cannot be achieved really but it takes a lot that we in this country can't afford yet! Yes, there is awareness about it, but you see, it is like a disease that is eating too deep such that treating its surface only amounts to a waste of time. If the country means real safety business, then, it will require a lot of patience yet firm approaches. Everyone must come on board, even the home training must be changed, the school curriculum restructured, the managements doing their parts, and the various arms of government arising to their responsibilities. The methodology of establishing a safety culture must change to become more convincing. The people of this country need to buy into the goodness of safety* (looking at the researcher as if waiting for a response). He stated further: "*Do you see any of these happening soon? That is the main issue, my dear! This is one of the reasons why all you see around here are talks and talks with nothing significant happening*".

4.4 Discussion of findings

One of the main findings was the proof that manufacturing industry executives made suitable safety pledges by motivating their staff members to perform well at work. These safety climate demonstrations typically aim to encourage acceptable safety habits, which in turn result in a lower incidence of accidents, injuries, and similar incidents. Nevertheless, the records did not match the truth, considering Nigeria's occupational safety records. Additionally, the workers proved that the intended safety performance mission could be driven by the safety leadership demonstrations conducted under the direction of the federal government and its various branches. Research to date indicates that the federal government, as the entity in charge in this instance, will have a significant role in determining the effectiveness of safety measures (Syed-Yahya et al., 2022; Ogbonna et al., 2016; Fajana et al., 2011). The government has the authority to normalise employment interactions and conditions such that both employers and employees are held accountable for their behavioural displays at work, even though it is not envisaged that it will be fully responsible for ensuring safety. The results validate the conclusions of previous research that advocate for the need for zero occurrences in work life by demonstrating that employees are still suffering from several safety-related repercussions, such as accidents, injuries, and/or health issues (Linus, 2015; Bal, Bozkurt, & Ertemsir, 2013; Barati Jozan,

Ghorbani, Khalid et al., 2023; Barling & Hutchinson, 2000; Umoh & Torbira, 2013). However, it is evident from the data that many factory workers withheld information about the actual state of safety at their places of employment and appeared to be cut off from the safety realities in the industrial work units, even though some of them were open and honest in their accounts. On the other hand, these erroneous conclusions and the act of suppressing information could potentially compromise the ability to provide significant remedies for the current safety issues and impede the development of preventive measures that could have been implemented with sufficient knowledge.

4.5 Contribution of the Study

The results of this empirical study make a substantial contribution to the corpus of knowledge already available on occupational safety in Nigeria. By incorporating efficient HR practices and a safety climate, the work expands the scope of workplace safety and increases its efficacy, based on an evaluation of these aspects of employee safety performance behaviours (compliance and participation). There exists a connection between the aspirations of upper management to enhance employee compliance and engagement and the impact of government interventions on the safety aspirations of top management and/or employee safety. The results highlight the fact that the degree to

which government leadership and upper management encourage compliance behaviour and employee involvement will determine how effective HR strategies become. Based on the study's deductions, OHS will improve if the government actively participates in top management's commitment to safety, which will benefit HR procedures and safety performance behaviour.

4.6 Limitations of the Study

There are issues with this study that might make it impossible to generalise to other industrial units. Initially, the research is restricted to OHS procedures in the manufacturing unit of a particular Nigerian manufacturing industry. Investigating OHS practices in other areas, such as SMEs and Nigeria's service industries (such as the banking, telecommunications, IT, and security sectors), is therefore prohibited by the work's findings. As a result, the results can be skewed or conservative, understating the true condition of OHS in Nigeria's industrial sectors. Information obtained from the participants, however, reveals a baseline scenario that implies OHS problems are widespread in the business and will continue if left unchecked. Second, the scope of the study is restricted to OHS procedures in a few manufacturing sectors in Nigeria's western states. However, the study can only be understood, expanded upon, and extrapolated as a typical study for OHS practices throughout Nigeria, even though a sizable portion of the country's manufacturing sector is focused in the western region, where there is also a matching explosion in population growth. Key areas of concern and how other comparable industries have addressed them may have been found by a comparative analysis of OHS practices across industries. Additionally, it could progress research beyond reiterative analyses.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

While it is legally required of all stakeholders to contribute to OHS, it is also morally right to follow practices that advance safety in general. However, the first step towards actual safety success and the workplace safety movement is for all stakeholders to be open to acknowledging the truth of the safety situation as it exists. To improve safe practices, the OHS situation in Nigerian workplaces calls for all hands to be on deck. This is preferable to fighting reality, pretending that things are improving when they are not, or staying inactive. Crucially, to improve the current situation, all parties involved must be intentional in getting rid of everything that stands in the way of safe work practices. To ensure this, it

is also necessary to consciously cultivate a culture of truth-telling among all parties involved. People would be able to participate in efforts to increase safety by being willing to reveal information or welcome helpful contributions as a result.

Given that most production jobs in today's globalised world have a variety of risk factors and hazards that could harm employees if handled improperly, occupational health and safety must be given the utmost importance in Nigeria's manufacturing workplaces. All aspects of workplace safety and health—physical, mental, and social—including human resource management—must thus be maintained if firms in Nigeria are to remain relevant over the long run and the economy is to prosper. As was previously said, the development of desired performance behaviours requires the use of proper management strategies. However, management's values for these outcomes and their efforts to meet them are what matter when it comes to operationalising HR policies and deliverable performance outcomes. In contrast, with the right degrees of leadership from the higher authorities—of which the national government is the primary tool—management might be encouraged and helped to carry out their expected managerial duties. If the state of safety in the manufacturing sector is to be optimised, it is important to take note of the findings of the current study, which validate such prerequisites.

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