

THE IMPORTANCE OF OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH – SOME EVIDENCE FROM ROMANIA

A.S. TECĂU¹ I.B. CHIŢU²

Abstract: *The impact of the measures taken in European Union in the field of safety and security in work is different in the member countries. For instance Romania reporting one of the highest rates in the EU – 5.56 fatal accidents per 100.000 employed. In this context, the main objective of this paper was to determine the importance of health and safety actions in the organizational culture of a company. The results of the research lead to the conclusion that the participants are aware of the importance of occupational safety and health actions for both employees and companies. Compliance with occupational safety and health rules make majority of subjects proud and they also feel helped and protected.*

Keywords: *occupational safety and health, quantitative marketing research*

1. Introduction

One of the areas where European Union policies have had an increased impact is occupational safety and health at work, where a legal framework has been adopted at European Union level, containing a small number of regulations but covers a maximum number of risks (European Commission, 2019a). The impact of measures taken is different from within the EU countries, so the number of fatal accidents per 100,000 employees in 2015 was less than 1 in Germany, United Kingdom, Sweden and Netherlands and more than 3.50 in Portugal, Bulgaria, Lithuania and Romania, our country reporting one of the highest rates in the EU – 5.56 fatal accidents per 100.000 employed (European Commission, 2019b). The main beneficiaries of the actions towards occupational safety and health are the employees, but from those types of investment the companies have only to gain (ISSA, 2012). Creating safe working condition is not only a matter of law enforcement but also a foundational aspect of sustainable development for a company (Quelhas and Lima, 2006).

¹ *Transilvania* University of Braşov, alina_tecau@unitbv.ro

² *Transilvania* University of Braşov, ioana.chitu@unitbv.ro

Studies show that a climate of safety at work was associated with safety behaviours both for colleagues, co-workers and for management staff which strengthened the importance of commitment to safety amongst teams (Schwatka, Rosecrance, 2016).

Introducing a workplace safety management system can be a step forward in preventing accidents, but to make it effective in reducing and preventing accidents, this must be correlated with workers commitments (Wachter and Yorio, 2014). The same idea is supported by another study whose results have shown that company safety culture can be improved by focusing on safety-related interactions (Nielsen, 2014). At the same time, a workplace safety management system can be functional and effective only if it works on the principle of continuous improvement (Nowosielski, Spilka and Cesarz, 2012).

According to a report made by International Social Security Associations some of the greatest effects of actions taken for occupational safety and health are: reducing accidents, improving corporate image, improving workplace culture. Also the costs made in this respect added value by increasing employee motivation and satisfaction and by creating a better corporate image (ISSA, 2012).

2. Methodology

The main focus of this research, done at a conference for occupational safety and health, involving 95 workers from the manufacturing industry, was to determine the importance of health and safety actions in the organizational culture of a company. Quantitative marketing research was conducted through direct interviews of subjects, based on a questionnaire. The questionnaire contained 14 questions. Of those 95 subjects, 43,3% were between 46-55 years old, 21,1% were between 56-64 years old, 18,9% were between years 36-45 years old, 12,6% were between 26-35 years old, and only 2,1% were between 18-25 years old. The questionnaire data were processed with the SPSS statistical data-analysis software package.

3. Results

To achieve the main goal of the research, a first objective was to determine the extent to which the respondents appreciate the importance of actions that are taken towards health and security at work. The results indicate that an overwhelming majority of participants (80%) think existence of activities regarding occupational safety and health as being very important, 17,9% participants considers the existence of occupational safety and health activities within a factory being important and just 2,1% respondents were of the opinion that occupational safety and health activities is neither important nor unimportant. The result shows that despite the fact that our country is not placed in a favourable position among other countries of EU (European Commission, 2019b) because of the number of workplace accidents, there is still awareness of the need to carry out specific actions.

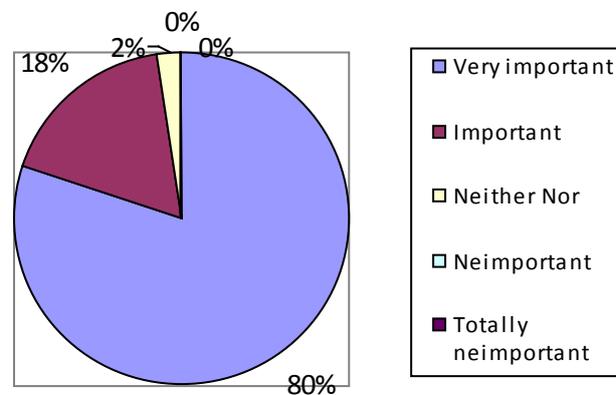


Fig. 1. *Importance of existence of activities regarding occupational safety and health*

A second objective of the research was related to the employee benefits directly resulted from the occupational safety and health activities.

The intent was to determine how much the participants believed that the number of accidents decreases when occupational safety and health actions are in place. More than half of the respondents, 58.9%, consider that occupational safety and health actions reduce the number of accidents to a larger extent.

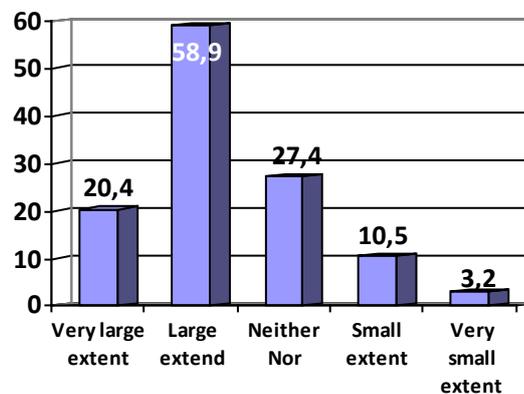


Fig. 2. *The extent to which occupational safety and health actions reduce the number of accidents*

The same positive appreciation was received from the participants regarding the extent on which occupational safety and health actions protect the employees. 54.7% respondents believe occupational safety and health actions protect the employees very much, 31.6% respondents consider that occupational safety and health actions protect employees to a large extent.

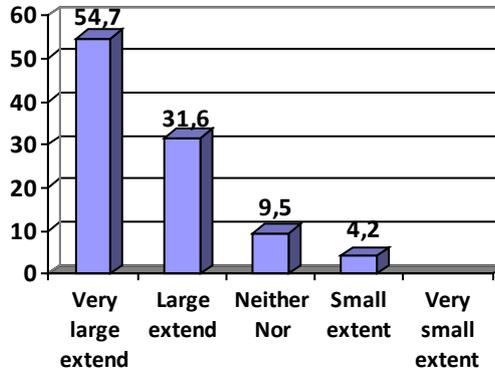


Fig. 3. *The extent to which occupational safety and health actions protect employees*

Awareness of occupational safety and health importance can also be translated by increasing psychological comfort for employees and by creating optimum working conditions. Thus, research results show that over 65% respondents believe that actions undertaken in occupational safety and health area create psychological comfort to employees to a large or to a great extent, and over 78% of those interviewed believe that actions taken in occupational safety and health area create optimum working conditions.

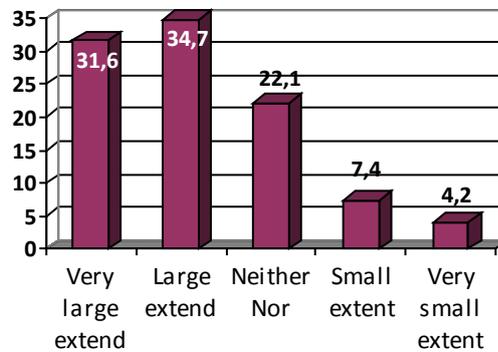


Fig. 4. *The extent to which actions undertaken in occupational safety and health area create psychological comfort*

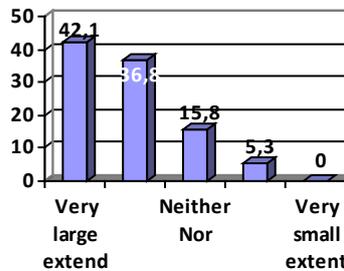


Fig. 5. *The extent to which actions undertaken in occupational safety and health area create optimum working conditions*

Aware, from specialty literature, of the link between occupational safety and health actions and productivity (Shikdar and Sawaqed, 2003), company image (ISSA, 2012) and competitive advantage, the last goal of the research was to find out what were respondents opinions regarding benefits that can arise from occupational safety and health actions in these areas mentioned above.

65% of the subjects interviewed consider that activities done to insure safety and health at workplace are beneficial for the company's development leading to increase of labour productivity and offering the company a competitive advantage (74%).

Studies show that one of the indirect benefits of implementing occupational safety and health actions is to create or improve company's image (ISSA, 2012).

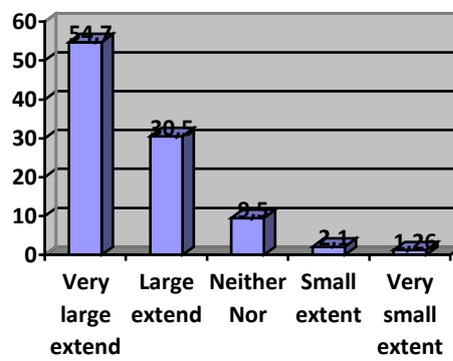


Fig. 6. *The extent to which actions undertaken in occupational safety and health area create a favourable image to the company*

When asked if occupational safety and health activities would create a business-friendly image, 54.7% respondents answered that occupational safety and health actions creates a favourable image to the company in a very large extent; 30.5% of respondents consider actions taken in the occupational safety and health area create a favourable image of the company to a large extent. All this proves that the participants in the study correctly appreciate and are extremely aware of the importance of these actions, both direct benefits employees and the company.

4. Conclusions

The results of the research lead to the conclusion that the participants are aware of the importance of occupational safety and health actions for both employees and companies. Most respondents consider occupational safety and health actions to reduce the number of workplace accidents to a very large extent, protect employees to a very large extent, protect the management team in dealings with law to a very large extent, create a favourable image of the company to a very large extent, creates optimal working conditions to a great extent, creates company advantage over competitors to a great extent, increases work productivity to a great extent and creates psychological comfort to employees to a great extent. Compliance with occupational safety and health rules make majority of subjects proud and they also feel helped and protected.

References

- European Commission, 2019. *Accidents at work statistics*. Available at <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Accidents_at_work_statistics#Number_of_accidents> [Accessed 10.03.2019].
- European Commission, 2019. *Health and safety at work*. Available at <<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=148#navItem-1>> [Accessed 10.03.2019].
- International Social Security Associations (ISSA), 2012. *Calculating the International Return on Prevention for Companies: Costs and Benefits of Investments in Occupational Safety and Health*. Available at <https://www.dguv.de/medien/inhalt/praevention/kurzbericht_praev_engl.pdf> [Accessed 10.03.2019].
- Nielsen, K. J., 2014. Improving safety culture through the health and safety organization: A case study. *Journal of Safety Research*, 48, pp. 7-17, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsr.2013.10.003>.
- Nowosielski, R., Spilka M. and Cesarz K., 2012. Improvement of the enterprise based on model of OSH management system. *Journal of Achievements in Materials and Manufacturing Engineering*, 51/1, pp. 39-46
- Quelhas, O. L. G., Lima G. B. A., 2006. Occupational Health and Safety Management System: A Critical Success Factor in the Introduction of the Principles of Sustainable Development in Brazilian Organizations. *InterfacEHS A Journal on Integrated Management of Occupational Health and the Environment*, 1/2, pp. 1-35
- Schwatka, N. V., Rosecrance, J. C., 2016. Safety climate and safety behaviors in the construction industry: The importance of co-workers commitment to safety. *Work*, 54/2, pp. 401-413, <https://content.iospress.com/articles/work/wor2341>
- Shikdar, A. A., Sawaqed, N. M., 2003. Worker productivity, and occupational health and safety issues in selected industries. *Computers & Industrial Engineering*, 45/4, pp. 563-572, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0360-8352\(03\)00074-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0360-8352(03)00074-3).
- Wachter, J.K., Yorio, P L., 2014. A system of safety management practices and worker engagement for reducing and preventing accidents: An empirical and theoretical investigation. *Accident Analysis & Prevention*, 68, pp. 117-130, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aap.2013.07.029>.