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COMPETENCIES OF SAFETY MANAGERS AND SAFETY EXPERTS IN THE FIELD OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT- SURVEY RESULTS

Abstract: Human resource management ultimately aims to maximize performance. Employees are the center of any business process and they have to give their best while preserving their health and safety. The role of the occupational safety and health specialists is to contribute to the business activities in the field of occupational safety and health. The aim of this study was to examine the participation of safety experts in the field of human resource management and to observe their impact on the satisfaction of safety issues among workers and their motivation. It was found that in case of small employers, human resource management is reduced to administrative work where the participation of safety experts is not needed. On the other hand, increased number of employees increases the number of activities related to human resources management, as well as the involvement of experts in the selected tasks.

Key words: human resources management, employee satisfaction, motivation of workers, safety, safety specialist.

INTRODUCTION

Theoretical background

Modern enterprises and their managers recognize the fact that workers and their potential are crucial for the success of the employer, and therefore managers should manage human resources, in both private and public sectors, as a critical business function [1]. Human resource management (HRM) is an area that has been extensively investigated worldwide since the 1980s, particularly its impact on business performance [1]. When we talk about business performance, the ability of workers to create new value has a greater importance than making profit. Knowledge as intellectual capital of the company is the most important source and a driver for the company development. The same author highlights that the need to solve problems related to employees [3] (the selection of employees, monitoring of work performance, motivation, etc.) does not depend on the size of the employer, only the same problems are solved in a different way and with a different organization. The greater number of employees demands wider functions and tasks of human resources management as well as the level of expertise of persons who perform these functions. Despite the delay, domestic economy increasingly recognizes the impact and importance of human resources management for good business. A brief review of national research shows that its importance is only partially recognized and only in relation to the private sector and with particular emphasis on large employers. A significant number of large and successful companies still have not recognized the importance of HRM as the basis of competitive advantage and the

main driver of growth and development of modern organizations [5]. Workers are put in the first place only "in theory", and to achieve better financial results, employers must invest in their people and human resource management activities. The author states that employers in private companies must be more mobile in their human resources policies, stimulating and well-paying their workers, identifying key staff; invest in staff education, measure the quality of human resources management and monitor the work performance of employees. One of the HRM activities is care for the health and safety of workers [1]. The issue of occupational health and safety of workers directly affects not only the health and safety of workers who perform their tasks, but the success or failure of the employer, the overall economy, the workers' families and society as a whole. Since the purpose of managing human resources is achieving the goals of the organization, then to the issue of safety and health of workers should be given a special attention. Unquestionably, the worker can take advantage of their potential and contribute to the success of the enterprise only if he or she is healthy and happy. The issue of HRM is not equal in all industries. Increasing technology increases the demand for human capital whose basic quality is knowledge (intellectual capital). On the other hand, certain economic activities demand lower skilled workers. The selection, retention and / or monitoring of work performance for those two categories of workers requires a completely different function and expertise in managing human resources. Parallel to the above mentioned facts, safety managers and health and safety professionals are expected to have knowledge and competencies that go beyond

technical knowledge and knowledge of legal framework and regulations in the field of occupational safety and health. Nowadays, those experts need to have very specific skills related to economic branch in which they perform their activities. Safety is a multidisciplinary field and experts are required to have knowledge of the factors of human behaviour, particularly work psychology, to measure employee satisfaction and observe and solve problems through communication and application of consultation skills. The ability to monitor and reward employees, maintaining high motivation and commitment of employees affects the workers' individual and thereby the employer's results.

Very often, especially in manufacturing and / or processing activities, a safety expert is the person that not only knows the work process, but communicates with employees and can identify problems that workers face which affect the "exploitation" of their potential and work. An important activity in HRM is strategic planning and recruitment. In order for the employees to respond to the requirements, job description, job requirements, as well as criteria for admission to work and success criteria should be clearly defined prior to their employment. Also, a special emphasis should be placed on human resource planning. Proper planning, defining and job analyzing avoids the confusion regarding the responsibilities of individuals in achieving set goals. Safety experts should have an important role when it comes to the orientation of new employees, particularly young workers and their training.

The purpose and research objective

The primary purpose of the research is to determine whether safety experts or persons who manage safety and health services, participate in work activities in the field of HRM. Particular emphasis is placed on the activities directly related to health and safety at work (planning and employment of human resources, training and orientation of new employees, job analysis, survey of attitudes, health programs and / or safety training). In addition to this goal, it is necessary to determine whether the observed sample shows differences in the quantity of engagement of safety experts in HR activities among small, medium and large employers. Finally, the authors are interested in whether the application of the knowledge and participation of safety experts in these activities has a positive impact on employee's motivation and stimulation for implementation of occupational safety rules as well as workers' attitudes towards safety in their work environment.

METHODOLOGY

For the purposes of achieving the objectives of this research, single empirical study has been conducted. An intentional sample was used with the prior assumption that the selected employers conduct their business in a highly risky sector (manufacturing) and that they can and want to provide the information necessary for achieving the objectives of the research. The study applied a combined methodology. The research instruments were questionnaires which gave quantitative indicators of human resource management practices in selected employers. Data on satisfaction and motivation of workers and indicators on the state of health and safety were collected in the same way. The survey was conducted on a sample of five relevant employers in Croatia high-risk jobs in industry with high rates of injury at work. The main strata in which economic entities are grouped in the structuring of this sample are their activities in accordance with the national classification of activities and their division into small (1-49), medium (50-249) and large (> 250) employers, depending on the number of employees. The sample involved one small, two medium and two large employers. Also, all employers in this sample comply with the legal obligations related to the employment of safety experts and existence of safety service. The total sample comprised of 1983 subjects (total number of employees) out of whom 381 completed the questionnaire (19%), whereas 32 survey ballots were not properly filled.

RESULTS

Data on employer and OSH

All employers in this sample, regardless of their size, perform their activities in high risk sectors and none of the employers has implemented voluntary system for managing health and safety (OHSAS 18001:2007). For the research purposes and in order to protect business data and the interests of employers, we used the names of the employers as it is represented in figure 1.

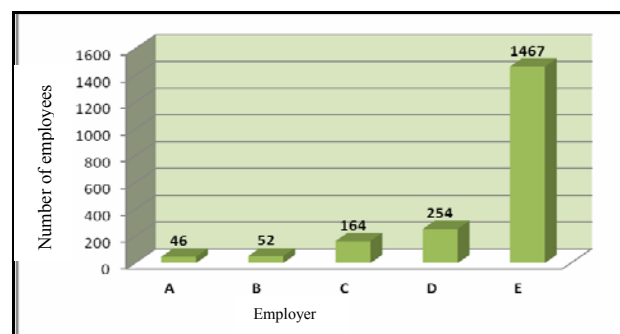


Figure 1. Size and name of the employer

Number of occupational injuries and rates of injuries are shown in the Figure 2. This figure shows that employers C and D have a very high injury rate compared to the economic sector they work in. None of the studied subjects had fatally injured workers.

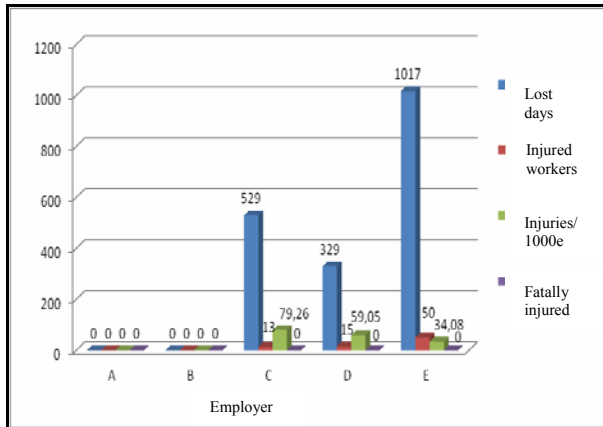


Figure 2. Number of injuries, injury rate per 1000 employees and working days lost due to occupational injuries

Human resource management and the participation of safety experts in HRM activities

To determine which HRM activities are carried out by the employer and which of these activities involved safety experts, we gave the same questionnaire to the HR manager and to the safety expert. The analysis of the questionnaires showed that the number of activities related to HRM, in particular the activities such as training and / or employee satisfaction is present only at enterprises that employ more than 1,500 workers. HRM activities of small and medium-sized employers can generally be reduced to recording of employee's files (Table 1). The tested sample showed that the number of activities in the field of human resource management grows with the number of employees and this analogy follows the participation of safety experts in HRM activities. The participation of safety experts in the activities that are related to safety and health of workers (job analysis, orientation of new employees, improving productivity and quality, planning holidays and absence and safety training) was particularly observed. The study showed that all safety experts are involved in planning vacations and absence as well as in improving productivity and quality. On the other side, only safety experts employed by large employers are involved in safety training. It is also important to note that the same pattern occurs in the case of orientation of new employees and training of employees (Table 1.)

Table 1. Activities in the field of HRM and participation of safety experts

<i>Activity</i>	<i>HRM department/ Participation of safety expert in HRM activities</i>				
<i>EMPLOYER</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>E</i>
Defining the conditions for employing	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Testing and interviewing candidates for employment	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES
Prediction of Human Resources	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES
Keeping the files of employees	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Job analysis	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
The study of satisfaction and employee attitudes	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES
Orientation of new employees	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES
Assessing the performance	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES
Professional development	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES
Improving productivity / quality	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Planning holidays and absence	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Safety training	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES
Health and recreation programs	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES

Note: Employers and HRM activities in which safety experts participate are shown in coloured fields

Satisfaction and employee motivation to work

Average ratings of employee satisfaction with OSH situation do not show any significant differences in small and large employers as well as the ratings in terms of injuries at work.

Thus we have the same average score for *consideration of attitudes by the superior and encouragement in the work by the supervisor* with the employer A and E. The same situation is with *precise knowledge of the tasks and activities and the existence of written instructions and work instructions*. Interestingly, almost all employers have equal average score in terms of satisfaction of environmental parameters, except for employer C who has generally received the lowest overall average rating (Table 2). Motivation of employees to work through the observed points and

their ranking by priority confirmed that the material factors such as salaries and especially the necessity of keeping job is in line with the economic situation and the situation on the labour market (Figure 3). More than 25% of workers think that the most important motivator is the necessity of keeping the job, whereas in small and medium-sized enterprises, more than 30% of workers think that the least important factor that affects their motivation to work is *the stimulation*. It is interesting to note that workers employed in small and medium-sized enterprises ranked *interpersonal relationships* as a motivator, while the workers employed by large enterprises consider *opportunity for advancement* as more important motivator.

Table 2. Average ratings of employee satisfaction with OSH situation

The statements from the questionnaire	Employer				
	A	B	C	D	E
I precisely know what my duties are	3,7	4,0	3,4	4,0	3,7
I have a precise written instructions and work instructions for my tasks	3,2	4,1	3,1	3,7	3,6
I am satisfied with the working conditions (temperature, humidity, protective equipment, etc.)	3,6	3,8	2,7	3,7	3,6
Occasionally, my supervisors check if I perform work assignments in accordance with the instructions	3,1	3,6	3,4	3,6	4,0
My supervisor encourages me in my work	3,6	3,9	2,5	3,5	3,6
I am free to express my opinions, suggestions and recommendations	3,7	3,9	3,5	3,2	3,6
I have all the materials and equipment to properly perform my tasks	3,6	4,2	3,7	4,1	3,3

Assessing immaterial factors that contribute most to the quality of work, regardless of the employer size, the workers put *the good organization* in the first place (employer A - 40%, B - 37% , C - 46%, D- 38% and E - 33%). A significant percentage of workers in small companies think that the most important motivational factor is *interpersonal relations* (22%), whereas in large enterprises the percentage for this factor is 15%. The analysis also showed that *safety factor*, as a factor that affects the quality of work, is mostly valued in large and medium-sized enterprises.

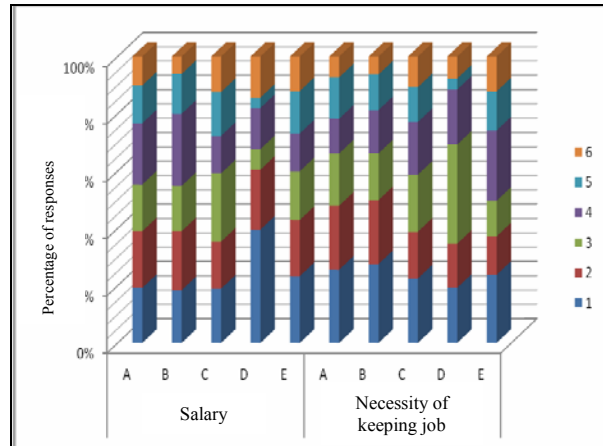


Figure 3. Material factors as motivation to work

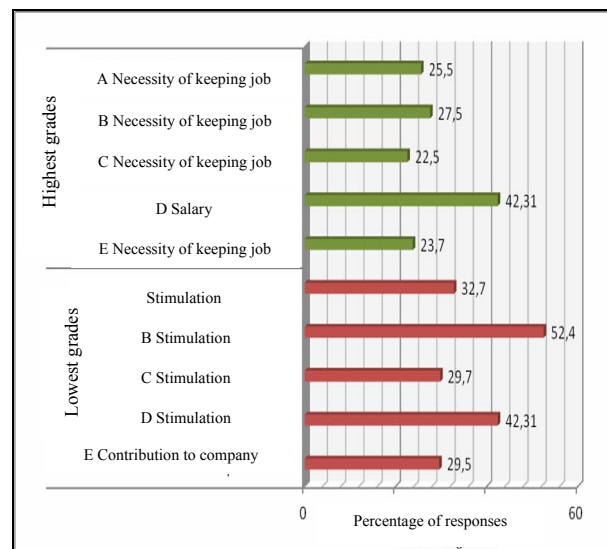


Figure 4. The highest and lowest rated motivating factors

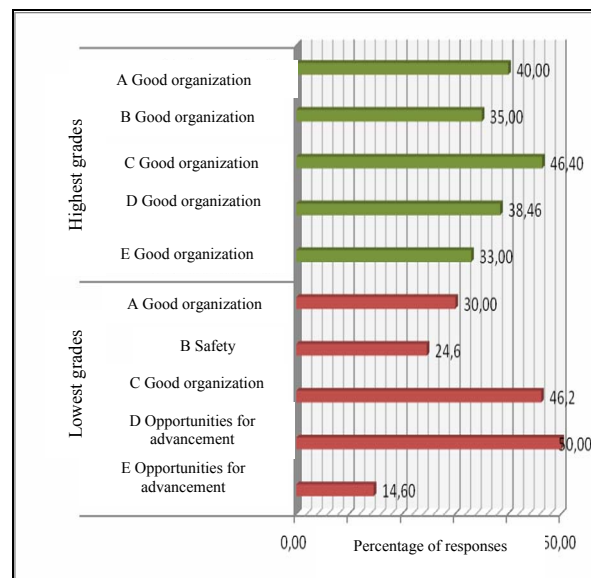


Figure 5. The highest and lowest rated immaterial factors that influence the work

DISCUSSION

Safety and health at work system in the Republic of Croatia, among other problems, is characterized by dissatisfaction of safety experts with their status and position in the company. This specially refers to the attitudes of others towards their profession and the general neglect for the importance of safety and occupational health and safety, as an essential and unavoidable part of business activities. On the other hand, human resource management as the most important resource in Croatian companies has not yet taken hold [5]. Together with the economic situation at the global level, this leads to a situation in which is ungrateful to insist on putting emphasis on the increased involvement of safety experts in HRM activities. It should be noted that the integration of a segment in the broader context of business (safety in human resource management) requires the importance of safety and health at work, not only in theory but in practice. Otherwise, we may find that the inclusion of safety experts in these activities diverts attention from what is essential and that is protection of workers' health and their safety.

The tested sample is certainly not sufficient to generalize the results but, given the size and credibility of employers we can make certain conclusions. This study showed that human resource management is not sufficiently recognized even in large companies, which has also been confirmed in larger studies [6]. In order for employees to respond to the requirements, the required job description and job requirements should be clearly defined prior to their employment. We believe that this is the area in which safety experts can contribute when it comes to managing human resources. Of course, the scope of HRM activities depends on human potential. In order to maintain and increase their intellectual capital, the potential employers have to invest in training, employing quality staff, establish a system of staff appraisal and performance, reward and promote quality staff. On the other hand, the activities in which the research was carried out, mostly refer to physical strength and physical abilities of workers as capital. Our attention is not to diminish their contribution and importance of proper management of this kind of workers. It is unrealistic to expect the same training needs, methods of motivation and performance appraisal as in the workers who are primarily intellectual capital. Generally, the examined sample shows that the extent and width of the functions of HRM as well as number of staff who conduct these activities are not the same as in high-tech industry or the labour process which is supported by advanced technology. Unsurprisingly, the result shows reduced HRM activities for small enterprises and their volume increases with the number of employees which is consistent with the relevant literature [1].

CONCLUSION

The conducted research confirmed that the participation of safety experts in HRM activities can influence the state of safety and health of the employer. The primarily aim is to raise the awareness of the employer and workers on safety issues. The fact is that bigger employers have better organized workers who are aware of their rights and legal obligations of the employer, but they are also more often the subject of inspection. Despite the size of the sample, the survey showed that the increase in engagement of safety expert is proportional with increase of safety awareness. On the other hand, this is a base for building a safe working environment. Competences of safety experts rise or fall depending on the field they work in. His/her competence must be in accordance with the requirements of demanding business processes and technological developments, new forms of work and employment, and thus the new dangers the workers are faced with. It is recommended that this type of research is carried out in other high risk sectors. The question is whether the competences of safety experts are both in accordance with technology of working process, and with the protection of workers and their potential. We highly recommend that safety experts participate in the HRM activities especially in planning and implementing safety training, planning and implementation of professional development and all activities related to changes in production processes. Competence of safety experts for these jobs requires additional research but contribution in terms of OSH is not questionable. Finally, if risk reduction is a process which includes the activities - education of future workers, defining the conditions for recruitment, selection of workers, training and professional development, evaluation - then it is logical that certain HRM activities must involve safety experts within the framework of competencies that they have.

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BIOGRAPHY

Ivana Krišto was born in Zagreb in 1981. She graduated from Higher Police School (2003) and from University College of Applied Sciences in Safety (2005). She finished postgraduate studies in information sciences at the University of Zagreb, Faculty of Organization and Informatics in Varazdin. She is currently working on her PhD thesis in Information Science at the University of Zagreb. Her research interest include: safety and occupational health, management and public administration.



REZULTATI ISTRAŽIVANJA KOMPETENCIJA RUKOVODIOCA SLUŽBI ZAŠTITE NA RADU ILI STRUČNJAKA ZAŠTITE NA RADU U UPRAVLJANJU LJUDSKIM RESURSIMA

Ivana Krišto, Marija Batak, Ana Šijaković

Rezime: *Upravljanje ljudskim resursima ima za cilj maksimalizaciju rezultata rada. Radnik (zaposleni) kao središte bilo kog poslovnog procesa treba dati svoj maksimum, a pritom sačuvati svoje zdravlje i sigurnost. Uloga stručnjaka zaštite na radu je da doprinese ovim poslovnim aktivnostima svojim znanjem i kompetencijama u području sigurnosti i zaštite zdravlja na radu. Cilj studije bio je da na ispitnom uzorku u području rizične delatnosti analizira učešće stručnjaka u razmatranim aktivnostima iz oblasti upravljanja ljudskim resursima, kao i uticaj njegovih aktivnosti na zadovoljstvo radnika stanjem sigurnosti i njihovu motivaciju. Utvrđeno je kako se kod malih poslodavaca upravljanje ljudskim resursima svodi na kadrovske poslove u kojima učešće stručnjaka zaštite na radu nije potrebno. S druge strane, porastom broja zaposlenih, raste i broj aktivnosti vezanih za upravljanje ljudskim resursima kao i angažman stručnjaka u razmatranim zadacima.*

Ključne reči: motivacija radnika, sigurnost, stručnjak zaštite na radu, upravljanje ljudskim resursima, zadovoljstvo radnika.