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Methods of Improving Reporting of Occupational Accidents in the Nigerian Construction Industry

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ABSTRACT

Information concerning occupational accidents are far less accessible in developing nations, and where data do present, they are mostly undependable. The serious problem is under-reporting. Various types of occupational injuries information are sometimes not reported to the appropriate authorities by the construction organizations. Also, the regulatory authorities with the statutory obligation to ensure all occupational accidents are reported, perform below standard. The aim of the study therefore is to explore the method of improving the reporting of occupational accidents in the Nigerian construction industry. Literature review of under-reporting of occupational accidents was conducted, thereafter, a field survey with 300 structured questionnaires were distributed, to solicit information from the construction professionals in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja Nigeria. 235 questionnaires were returned, therefore considered for the analysis of the study. The relative importance index was used in the analysis of the data with SPSS software. The study found that an increase in health and safety awareness will enhance employees and organizations in the recording and reporting of occupational accidents. The study suggests that organizations and employees should keep with internal accidents recording systems whether or not legal obligations to report them are in place, the reasons being for humanitarian, economic, management and industrial relations.

Keywords: *Under-Reporting, Occupational Accident, Construction Industry*

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

Collection and analysis of information on near-miss have the benefits of achieving a comprehensive understanding of how minor errors or failures develop from near misses into real accidents, to accomplish a dependable quantitative understanding of the incidence influences or combinations of causes giving increase to incidents, and to sustain a certain degree of awareness to hazards, particularly when the proportion of real injuries and other accidents are previously low in the organization (Hale et al, 1991).

Challenges associated with recording is the lack of an effective system, that is required for efficient reporting and preventive measures and the absence of knowledge concerning the requirements and how to establish an effective system of reporting.

An increase in health and safety awareness has the potential of improving reporting of occupational accidents (Nawarathna and Nayanthara, 2014; Workers' Compensation Board of Nova Scotia, 2015) then follow by continuous education and training.

Research Objectives

The aim of the study is to explore the methods of improving the reporting of occupational accidents in the Nigerian construction industry. The objectives are to examine the importance of collection and analysis of near-miss information, to assess the challenges and problems associated with the recording and reporting of occupational accidents, and to identify the approaches to improving recording and reporting of occupational accidents. The review of the literature revealed the challenges to the recording and reporting of occupational accidents. Therefore, construction health and safety experts and all stakeholders in the industry are looking for ways to solve the problems of under-reporting

of occupational accidents. Consequently, it is important to examine the appropriate approaches to improving the recording and reporting of occupational accidents in the Nigerian construction industry.

Methodology

The literature review of under-reporting of occupational accidents was conducted from journals, articles, magazines, reports, and textbooks related to occupational health and safety. This forms the primary basis of information on under-reporting of occupational accidents and to identifies, causes, and challenges of reporting and recording of occupational accidents, then variables for methods of improving reporting of occupational accidents were drawn. Thereafter, a field survey with 300 questionnaires structured in a 5-point linker scale were administered to solicit information from the construction professionals in Abuja, Nigeria. 235 questionnaires were returned which represent 78.33 %, considered suitable for the analysis of the study. The data collected were analyzed through the relative importance index method with SPSS software and excel. This is to find out the importance of factors that represented the methods of improving reporting and recording of occupational accidents in the Nigerian construction industry. The factors put in rank, the top-ranked is more substantial than the next.

Results

The demographic characteristics of the respondents in the study illustrated as follows: academic qualification HND/BSC (36.2 %), MSc (48.9 %), PGD (4.3 %), and PhD (10.6 %). The professional affiliation of the respondent showed: Quantity Surveyors (40.4 %), Architects (14.9 %), Builder (6.4 %), and Engineers (83.3 %). The working experience of the respondents showed that 0-5 years (4.30%), 6-10 years (21.30 %), 11-15 years (12.80 %), 16-20 years (19.10 %), and 21 years and above (42.60 %). The nature of the operation of the respondents were: 48.9 % worked in consulting organizations and 51.1 % worked in construction organizations. The result of the study shows the increase in health and safety awareness has the highest relative importance index of (0.864), while the subsequent results were: continuous education and training (RII 0.855), occupational health and safety auditing for both employers and employees (RII 0.813), making reporting easier (RII 0.800), no contracts to be issued without health and safety policy and approval (RII 0.782), encourage the submission of self-assessment report to health and safety department (RII 0.753), increasing illness and accidents surveillance (RII 0.749), Trade Union participation (RII 0.749).

Findings

The finding of the study revealed that an increase in health and safety awareness has a roles to play in the recording and reporting of occupational health and safety. Awareness will inform organizations and employees about the importance of data such as for planning and formulation of policy for the prevention of occupational accidents, allocation of

resources, improving understanding of occupational hazards, and better work practices and procedures.

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