

Infrastructure Evaluation Of Universities In Compliance With Occupational Safety And Health Standards, Pampanga, Philippines

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Abstract: - Covid-19 pandemic has greatly affected many infrastructures including schools and universities to prevent the transmission of virus. During the times of pandemic, occupational safety and health plays a vital role in private and public sectors to support the safety and health of employees. The Department of Health provided guidelines on how to implement and health and safety protocols in the workplace in compliance with the OSH standards. In this study, the researchers evaluated the infrastructures and, health and safety policy guidelines of the university in Pampanga to determine if they are complying with the Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) standards.

Key Words: —*State universities, occupational safety and health, infrastructure evaluation, covid-19 pandemic, health and safety policy guidelines.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) is a discipline with wider scope that specialized in many fields which aims the promotion and maintenance highest degree of physical, mental and social well-being of employees in all occupations; preparation and preservation of working conditions; prevention of work-related health issues; protection of workers against risk [1].

Universities and colleges are intended to provide education which is supposed to be the core objective of such academic institutions. Occupational safety and health (OSH) is connected with any employee in any organization including schools and universities. Risks that are related to OSH may mitigate the aims and objectives of universities [2].

One of the risks that extremely weakens the aims and objectives of schools and universities is the Covid-19 pandemic. This global health crisis has greatly disrupted the education systems in history, affecting nearly 1.6 billion students in more than 190 countries.

Closing of schools and universities have affected 94% of the students' population worldwide and up to 99% in low and lower-middle class income countries [3]. In the Philippines, the corona virus has made 2.6 million students out of school because their parents lost their jobs or became underemployed and many students had to transfer to public schools [4].

For the time being, the Department of Health supports face-to-face classes in low-risk areas, or in areas wherein the virus is under control. DOH also said that health facilities in school should be at hand in compliance with minimum health standards [5]. In Higher Education Institutions, Joint Memorandum Circular No. 2021-001 was released providing the guidelines on the gradual reopening of campuses of higher education institutions for limited face-to-face classes during pandemic based on their capability to comply with the health and safety protocols, to modified their facilities, and to get support of their stakeholders [6]. Furthermore, the Civil Service commission released Joint Memorandum Circular No. 1, s. 2020 that provides occupational safety and health (OSH) standards for the public sector including state universities and colleges which aimed to protect government employees from the dangers of injury, sickness and death in the workplace [7]. The Department of Health created a workplace handbook which is a product of the Occupational Safety and Health Alignment Workshop conducted among national government agencies and

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other organizations for the management and prevention of Covid-19 [8]. The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) together with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) have created a checklist on compliance with safety and health measures to prevent and control Covid-19 transmission that can be used to evaluate the health and safety protocols of every organization for the protection of their employees [9].

For this study, the researchers only focused on the infrastructures and, safety and health protocols implemented inside the university in compliance with the OSH standards and Workplace Handbook for Covid-19 Management and Prevention provided by the Department of Health. This study aimed to evaluate the infrastructures of all the campuses of a state university in Pampanga in compliance with the occupational safety and health (OSH) standards. Additionally, the researchers also evaluated the safety and health policy guidelines inside the campuses of their employees for Covid-19 management.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

School safety is the prevention of incidents and reduction of injury or damage in properties [10]. Safety plays a vital role in academic institutions. Just like other public sectors, schools and colleges are adapting to changes and continuously meeting existing challenges as well [11].

One of the major challenges of academic institution in history is the Covid-19 pandemic. Most governments worldwide have disclosed temporarily the schools and universities to contain the spread of virus [12]. During the times of pandemic, occupational safety and health (OSH) have very important roles in private and public sectors to protect the lives of people [13] including schools and universities.

The OSH Management System (OSHMS) gives a tailored advice and links to support in managing Covid-19 related risks for the health, safety and well-being of employees in schools. The Covid-19 Safety Management Plan applies to all schools and outlines the key risks in OSH and links to the latest guidance which sets out the approach for managing safety risks in schools in accordance with the minimum requirements of the said management plan [14].

In India, Covid-19 has thrown the educational system of this country into turmoil. India has made prevention control and strategies that can be implemented by the schools for re-opening and conduct of schools during and post Covid-19 period [15].

Covid-19 health and safety guidelines for K-12 settings was developed by the Ministry of Education with the Ministry of Health in British Columbia. The guidelines intended to support the education and stakeholders to be informed about the public health measures provided by the government and how these measures support a safe school environment [16].

In the Philippines, the Civil Service Commission issued a memorandum requiring government sectors including schools and universities to establish health and safety programs, as compliance with the guidelines of OSH standards, in the workplace to secure the safety and health of employees [7]. A study in the Philippine education presented a post-covid educational plans for different universities to imposed these plans to protect the health and safety both students and employees [17].

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study, the researchers used descriptive research method. Descriptive research involves collections of quantitative information that can be tabulated or can describe categories of information. Observational and survey methods are frequently used to collect data from the study [18].

The data collection was done in all campuses of a state university in Pampanga. This university consist of seven (7) campuses including the main campus. The researchers will conduct an observation on the infrastructures of the university. The researchers used the revised occupational safety and health checklist of Bureau of Working Conditions of Department of Labor and Employment for the evaluation of university's infrastructures in compliance with OSH standards [19]. Furthermore, the Workplace Handbook on Covid-19 Management and Prevention provided by the Department of Health [8] and the checklist on compliance with safety and health measures to prevent and control Covid-19 transmission provided by the Department of Labor and Employment together with the Department of Trade and Industry were also used to check if all the campuses follow the health and safety protocols in compliance also with OSH standards.

To organize and summarize data gathered from the study, the researchers used descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics are used to provide and describe the summary of the data collected [20].

IV. RESULTS

In this study, the researchers asked for the assistance of the Director of University Occupational Safety and Health Office (UOSHO) regarding with the evaluation of the infrastructures in compliance with the OSH standards using the checklist provided by the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE). The researchers skipped some items on the OSH checklist because these items are not applicable on the state university they are being evaluated.

A. Infrastructure Evaluation In Compliance With OSH Standards

Based on the result of the OSH checklist, most of the items indicated in the checklist were being complied by the university except from the item about the separate sanitary, washing and sleeping facilities for all gender and those items that are not applicable with the occupational safety and health standards of the university.

B. Evaluation on the Covid-19 Management

The researchers also evaluated the Covid-19 management of the university using the checklist of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) and Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) on compliance with safety and health measures to prevent and control Covid-19 transmission. Based on the result of the checklist for Covid-19 management, majority of the items indicated were being complied by the university except for those items that are remarked as 'not applicable' under isolation and referral because the university does not have their own isolation facilities for symptomatic individuals.

V. DISCUSSION

Based on the findings of the study using the checklists, the university complied with the occupational safety and health standards of all the infrastructures of the school. Therefore, employees can work safely on their workplace and the school follows the OSH standards provided by DOLE. Furthermore, the university also complied with the safety and health measures provided also by DOLE together with DTI to prevent and control the transmission of Covid-19. However, the university does not have their own isolation facility for their employees who are infected by the virus. Based on the observation also of the researchers, some offices do not strictly monitor the proper wearing of face mask and face shield to those students who are entering the office.

VI. CONCLUSION

Covid-19 pandemic has greatly affected many infrastructures including schools and universities to prevent the transmission of virus. During the times of pandemic, occupational safety and health plays a vital role in private and public sectors to support the safety and health of employees. The Department of Health (DOH) provided guidelines on how to implement and health and safety protocols in the workplace in compliance with the OSH standards. The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) and Department of Trade Industry (DTI) also created a checklist for all the organizations to evaluate their workplace if they are complying and following the safety and health protocols needed for Covid-19 management.

In this study, the researchers evaluated the infrastructures and the safety and health policies and guidelines to determine if the university they are being studied is complying with the standards of occupational safety and health, and the guidelines for Covid-19 management to prevent and control the transmission of the said virus.

Based on the findings, the researchers have concluded that the university have complied with the occupational safety and health standards in terms of university's infrastructures. Moreover, the university also complied with the safety and health policy guidelines provided by the DOH for the prevention and control of Covid-19 transmission. Therefore, the university is strictly implementing the provided safety and health policy guidelines in workplace to protect its employees against the virus.

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