Assessment of Employees Health and Safety at workplace: A Post Pandemic Employees Role in Ensuring a Safe Working Environment in the Philippines

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Abstract: - As businesses reopen their workplaces amid and post-COVID-19, it's important to have comprehensive plans to transition employees back into the office, maintain a healthy workplace, and enforce safety and wellness standards. Despite vaccinations and greater testing, the virus is expected to be around for years to come, impacting how people work, gather, and communicate. While government organizations and businesses have provided guidelines and suggestions for building reopening strategies, each company leader must consider the unique needs of their own employees and offices. This way, they can develop the processes they need to ensure the well-being of their workforce and continue to operate successfully. The topic for the work was an assessment of employee's health and safety at workplace in the post-pandemic world: ensuring a safe working environment in the Philippines. Being an establishment, the employee, management, administrator and other stakeholders are expose to several risks and hazards. The research aimed among other things to examine the role of employees in ensuring their own safety, role of management in Health and Safety during post pandemic period, workplace policies and procedures in place to make work place safe and occupational Health and Safety awareness of employee. The employees, head of department and administrator in the department of establishments formed the population of the study. Sixty-two respondents formed the sample size of the study. Data was collected through questionnaire, interviews, google link survey and review of relevant literature from books, articles, website etc. It was found out that the current occupational health and safety practices at the establishment were adequate. Employees commitment and compliance to health and safety rules was also high. It was recommended that management of the establishment must have a regular communication and maintain regular monitoring and evaluation and effective training of occupational health and safety policies for higher improvement.

Key Words: — *Health and Safety, Employees, Management, Policies, Assessment.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The reasonable expectation that employees have of their employers except that of salary is safe working environment. They want their employers to give them full protection from job hazards, but it is important that employees realize they have a role in maintaining a safe workplace as well. [2] No matter what job you work in, it pays to be alert when it comes to health and safety.

Some jobs are obviously more dangerous than others, but accidents can happen in any type of workplace.

The best policy is always to prevent an accident occurring in the first place rather than trying to deal with the consequences afterwards. [4] The accountability for encouraging a safety culture to improve behaviour and performance in the workplace is shared both by employers and employees. They also are expected to share accountability to encourage peers to value safe work practices and safety programs in a positive, proactive way. Employers and employees can work together to achieve an effective safety culture. [2][14].

Employee health and safety programs should be a major priority for management because they safe lives, increase productivity, and reduce costs.

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II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Role of Employees in ensuring their own Safety

Safety is the business and responsibility of every employee and can be achieved through proper education, training, use of protective equipment and by following safety rules, regulations, standards, and laws. Each employee is responsible for understanding and practicing appropriate safety procedures. [2][18][19]

2.2 Role of Management in Health and Safety during post pandemic period

Safe and Healthy working conditions are fundamental to decent work. [7][16]

One of the major roles that the management needs to ensure is having a comprehensive emergency preparedness plan in the workplace crafted to address health crises and pandemics, workplaces may be better prepared to develop a quick,

coordinated and effective response, while adapting the measures to the specific emergency situation that the enterprise is facing. [7][8]

Another crucial role is the continuous monitoring of OSH conditions and appropriate risk assessment will be required to ensure that control measures related to the risk of contagion are adapted to the specific evolving processes, conditions of work and characteristics of the workforce during the critical period of contagion and afterwards, so that reoccurrences may be prevented. [7][8]

Here are some of the identified procedures employers should start doing these things now, even if COVID-19 has not arrived in the communities where they operate. They can already reduce working days lost due to illness and stop or slow the spread of COVID-19 if it arrives at one of your workplaces: [7][8]

- Physical distance. For example: assessing the risk of interactions between workers, contractors, customers and visitors and implementing measures to mitigate these risks; organizing work in a way that allows for physical distancing between people; when feasible using phone calls, emails or virtual meetings rather than face to face meetings; and introducing working shifts to avoid large concentrations of workers in the facilities at any one time. [7,][8]

- Hygiene. For example: providing disinfectant and

regularly disinfecting common areas; promoting a culture of hand-washing; promoting good respiratory hygiene at the workplace (e.g., covering your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze). [7,][8]

- Cleaning. For example: promoting a culture of regularly cleaning the surfaces of desks and workstations, doorknobs, telephones, keyboards and working objects with disinfectant and should regularly disinfect common areas such as rest rooms. [7][8]

- Training and Communication. For example: training management, workers and their representatives on the adopted measures to prevent risk of exposure to the virus and on how to act in case of COVID-19 infection; training on the correct use, maintenance and disposal of PPE; maintaining regular communication with workers to provide updates on the situation in the workplace, region or country; informing workers about their right to remove themselves from a work situation that poses an imminent and serious danger for life or health, in accordance with laid out procedures and immediately inform their immediate supervisor of the situation. [7][8]

- Personal protective equipment (PPE). When necessary, providing adequate PPE along with closed bins for hygienically disposing of such materials. [7][8]

- Response. For example: in line with the guidance of local authorities, encouraging workers with suspected symptoms of COVID-19 to not come to the workplace and expanding access to paid sick leave, sickness benefits, and parental/care leave and informing all workers; arranging for isolation of any person who develops COVID-19 symptoms at the work site, while awaiting transfer to an appropriate health facility; adequately disinfecting the work site; providing health surveillance of persons who have been in close contact with the infected worker. [7][8][15]

Preparation for COVID-19 even this post pandemic period is still a major consideration for everyone health and safety. Simple precautions and planning can make a big difference. Action now will help protect your employees and your business. [8]

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2.3 Workplace Policies and Procedures in place to make work place safe

Safe work practices are generally written methods that define how tasks are performed while minimizing risks to people, equipment, materials, environment, and processes. Safe Work Procedures are documented procedures for performing tasks. [9]

Safe Work Procedures are documented procedures for performing tasks. The purpose of a safe work procedure is to reduce the risk to health and safety in the workplace and reduce the likelihood of an injury by ensuring that employees know how to work safely when carrying out the tasks involved in their jobs. Safe work procedures may also be called safe work method statements. [9]

Some of the types of Workplace Safety Procedures and Instructions: [9]

- Handling chemicals – these involves procedures on how to handle chemicals in workplace where these are used.

- Lifting and moving objects – are procedures that pertain to how objects are to be lifted and moved safely and without strain to the person or worker.

- Working at heights – these are procedures that underscore what a worker must observe to keep himself safe while working in an elevated structure or environment.

- Slips, trips and falls – are procedures that pertain to safety procedures that should be in place to prevent slips, trips and fall accidents in the workplace.

- Housekeeping – are procedures that pertain to how housekeeping activities should be done while keeping in mind safety, health and well-being of workers in a facility or workplace.

- Electrical equipment – these are safety procedures that pertain to the installation, repair and maintenance of electrical equipment.

The following steps should be followed to ensure a sound safe work procedure is developed: [9]

- Observe the task/activities: t is important to observe the task/activity being performed the preferred way to ensure safest method is documented.

- Review associated legislative requirements: Some task/activities are governed by legislative requirements. These must be considered when developing a safe work procedure to ensure any legal requirements are included.

- Record the sequence of basic job steps: write down the steps that make up the task/activity.

- Record potential hazards of each step: Next to each step identify what may have potential to cause injury or disease

- Identify ways of eliminating and controlling the hazards: list the measures that need to be put in place to eliminate or control any likely risk.

- Test the procedure: Observe staff/student following the safe work procedure

- Obtain approval: Before the safe work procedure can be used it must be approved by each approver nominated.

- Monitor and review: Make sure the activity is supervised to ensure the documented process is being followed.

The main goal of safety and health programs is to prevent workplace injuries, illnesses, and deaths, as well as the suffering and financial hardship these events can cause for workers, their families, and employers. The recommended practices use a proactive approach to managing workplace safety and health. Traditional approaches are often reactive – that is, problems are addressed only after a worker is injured or becomes sick, a new standard or regulation is published, or an outside inspection finds a problem that must be fixed. These recommended practices recognize that finding and fixing hazards before they cause injury or illness is a far more effective approach. [10]

The idea is to begin with a basic program and simple goals and grow from there. If you focus on achieving goals, monitoring performance, and evaluating outcomes, your workplace can progress along the path to higher levels of safety and health achievement. [10]

Employers will find that implementing these recommended practices also brings other benefits. Safety and health programs help businesses: [10]

- Prevent workplace injuries and illnesses

- Improve compliance with laws and regulations

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- Reduce costs, including significant reductions in workers' compensation premiums

- Engage workers

- Enhance their social responsibility goals

- Increase productivity and enhance overall business operations

Implementation of these policies and procedures will surely help in promoting safety and health in the company.

2.4 Occupational Health and Safety Awareness of employee.

The Occupational Safety and Health Standards was formulated in 1978 in compliance with the constitutional mandate to safeguard the worker's social and economic well-being as well as his physical safety and health. Adopted through the tested democratic machinery of tripartism, the 1978 Standards is considered as a landmark in Philippine labor and social legislation. [11][13][18][19]

With joint efforts from the Bureau of Working Conditions, the International Labour Organization (ILO) Manila Office and the tripartite sectors, the revisions to the OSH Standards were approved in August 1989. With the latest improvements in the Standards, all establishments covered will now be provided with a better tool for promoting and maintaining a safe and conducive working environment. [11]

It deals with all aspects of health and safety in the workplace and has a strong focus on primary prevention of hazards. Its goal is to prevent accidents and harm to people from work-related activities.[12][13][18][19]

Some of the benefits of OSH are as follows: [12]

- Reduced risk or accidents or injuries by identifying and mitigating hazards

- Improved efficiency and productivity due to fewer employees missing work from illness or injury

- Improved employee relations and morale (a safer work environment is a less stressful work environment)

- Reduced costs associated with accidents or injuries (healthcare and rehabilitative costs, losses in productivity, impact on employees' well-being)

- Lower insurance premiums resulting from fewer workplace incidents and workers' compensation claims

Research has shown that safety and well-being at the workplace equals good business and profitability. Employers have primary responsibility for the occupational safety and health of workers. They are responsible for conducting risk assessments and organizing business operations with safety as the first priority. Governments set the frameworks to enable employers to provide flexible solutions to manage workplace safety. OSH performance is key to reputation management, particularly where businesses depend on the relationship with global consumers. [12][16][17]

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Descriptive survey design will be adopted in conducting this study. Descriptive survey design is appropriate because it involves collecting data in order to answer questions concerning the current status of the subjects under study. The descriptive methods are widely used to obtain data useful in evaluating present practices and in providing basis for decision making. Data was gathered using semi-structured questionnaire, and using Google link survey questionnaire send to selected respondents were done in selected private and public establishment in the Philippines on how employees' role in ensuring a safe working environment in the Philippines. Purposive sampling was employed and SPSS version 20 was used for data analysis. Percentile analyses was used for data interpretation. [2]

Identified in this article are some of the ways employees need to do to ensure their own safety:

- Read the workplace safety and health poster at the jobsite. [3]

- Comply with all applicable OSHA and Company safety standards. [2][3]

- Act as safely at work as you would elsewhere, if not more so. [2][6]

- Use the tools available to you to maintain a safe environment. [2][4][5][6]

- Educate yourself on hazards, safety practices, and rules. [2][[3][4][5][6]

- Communicate about unsafe practices and conditions. [2][3][6]

- Identify and lower your Level of Acceptable Risk (LOAR). [2][4][5][6]

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People go to work every day expecting not to be injured. As an employee, you have a right to a safe and healthful work environment, but employers are not the only ones responsible for your safety – you are, too. By accepting these six employee safety responsibilities, you are making your workplace a safer place for both you and your co-workers. [2]

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Methodology involves the description of the methods applied in carrying out the study. It answers the question "what", "why" and "where".

The focus for this paper was on private and public establishment in the Philippines which has about 50 private/public establishment. the selected 20% of these private and public establishment which was about 10 private/public establishment.

The study used both simple random sampling and purposive sampling. Random sampling, on the one hand, is a method which provides equal chance to every member of the population to be included in the study. The randomly selected 10 private/public establishment, which is 20% of the 50 private and public establishment. The 10 private and public establishment were selected randomly. Purposive sampling on the other hand, means that the sample may not be representative of the population. Purposive sampling was used to select participants from every department. The total sample size therefore constituted 55 employees, 7 administrators to make a total of 62. The study used questionnaire guide and observation protocol to collect data. The study used descriptive statistics. The data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics and presented in tables.

V. FINDINGS

The demographic data consisted of gender, age, designation, educational level, length of service, and departmental representation. This is shown in the consequent table.

Table.1. Gender of the Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	44	71.0	71.0
Female	18	29.0	100.0
Total	62	100.0	

The male respondents were more than twice to the female respondents representing a 71% and 29% respectively.

Table.2. Respondents Age

Age	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
20-30	23	37.1	37.1
31-40	17	27.4	64.5
41-above	22	35.5	100.0
Total	62	100.0	

Majority of the respondents were in the Age bracket of 20-30 years, which accounts for 37.1% of the total.

Those between 31-40 years were the fewest, represented by 27.4%, while those above 41 years of age represented 35.5% of the total.

Table.3. Designation of Respondents

Designation	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Administration	7	11.3	11.3
Head of Department	8	12.9	34.2
Employee	47	75.8	100.0
Total	62	100.0	

Most of the respondents were employees represented by 47 (75.8%). Head of Departments were 8(12.9%) while 7 (11.3%) of the respondents, were Administrators. It is therefore evident that employees represented the highest number of the respondents who provided information on health and safety within the selected public and government establishments.

Table.4. Educational Level of the Respondents

Qualification	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Master's Degree	6	9.7	9.7
Degree	41	66.1	75.8
Diploma	9	14.5	90.3

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Others	6	9.7	100.0
Total	**62**	**100.0**	

It is evident that majority of the respondents were degree holders (66.1%) followed by those with diploma's (9.7%) while those with master's degree represent (9.7%) and lastly, another certificate represents (9.7%) of the total. From this data, we can deduce that majority of the respondents are above the minimal academic requirement (Diploma level) in profession. It is therefore expected that they have better knowledge on health and safety in their workplace, and are able to provide reliable information.

Table.5. Length of Service of the Respondents

Length	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Less than 2 years	2	3.2	3.2
2-5 years	28	45.2	48.4
6-10 years	9	14.5	62.9
11-15 years	6	9.7	72.6
16-20 years	4	6.5	79.1
21-above	13	20.9	100.0
Total	**62**	**100.0**	

Majority (32) of the employees were more than 5 years old in their respective profession. Quite a number 30(48.4%) of the respondents had served in their profession for less than 2 years. This implies that both those who were young in the service were represented as well as those who showed a longer length of service. The frequency in respondents however, was skewed towards those who were young.

Table.6. Departmental Representation

Department	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
General Service	12	19.3	19.3
Technical	31	50.0	69.3
Finance	2	3.2	72.5
Human Resources	2	3.2	75.7
Administration	10	16.2	91.9
Planning	5	8.1	100.0
Total	**62**	**100.0**	

It is evident that the technical department represented the highest number of respondents 31(50.0%).

This department is closely followed by the General Services with 12(19.3%), the Administration 10(16.2%), Planning 5 (8.1%) while Finance (3.2%) and Human Resources (3.2%) were represented by a minority of the respondents. We can therefore deduce that, the information given by the respondents was reliable since all the departments were represented.

5.1 Workplace policies and procedures

A question that sought to find from respondents to what extent they think that the introduction of management on occupational safety and health policies during job orientation are necessary to have an effective health and safety.

Table.7. Workplace policies and procedures

Option	Number of Respondents	Percentage %
Strongly Agree	33	53.3
Agree	24	38.7
Neutral	2	3.2
Disagree	2	3.2
Strongly Disagree	1	1.6
Total	**62**	**100.0**

The 57 majority respondents that they are agree that the introduction of management on occupational safety and health policies during job orientation are necessary to have an effective health and safety.

5.2 Employee assistance program

A question with an intention of finding out from respondents to what extent they think that the regular communication between employees and management about safety issues as a necessity in preventing occupational hazards.

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Table.8. Employee assistance program

Option	Number of Respondents	Percentage %
Strongly Agree	29	46.8
Agree	29	46.8
Neutral	2	3.2
Disagree	2	3.2
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Total	62	100.0

The 58 majority respondents that they are agree that the that the regular communication between employees and management about safety issues as a necessity in preventing occupational hazards

5.3 Impacts of occupational health and safety on job

A question intended to find out from respondents if they think effective training of occupational health and safety policies and follow-up program have any impact on safety awareness of an employee.

Table.9. Impacts of occupational health and safety on job

Option	Number of Respondents	Percentage %
Yes	62	100
No	0	0
Not Sure	0	0
Total	62	100.0

From Table 9, it is clear that all 62 respondents showed that they think effective occupational health and safety policies have impact on safety awareness of an employee.

The respondents stated the following as the benefits the employees derive from effective occupational health and safety policies.

• Increase knowledge on health and safety policies at workplace

• Increase knowledge on rights of employees on safety

• Improve safety and health practices on workplace

From the above, it is clear that an organization cannot achieve its objectives without the workforce, hence the health and safety of the workforce should be a priority.

5.4 Management role on Health and Safety during post pandemic period

A question which was set with the intention of finding out from respondents, if the management were given special instructions to an employee to secure safety and health at the workplace during this post pandemic period.

Table.10. Management role on Health and Safety during post pandemic period

Option	Number of Respondents	Percentage %
Yes	60	96.8
No	0	0
Not Sure	2	3.2
Total	62	100.0

A look at table 10, it shows that sixty of the respondents indicated that the management has a special instruction to secure safety and health at the workplace whereas 2 respondents stated that they are not sure if the management has a special instruction to secure safety and health at the workplace.

From the analysis, it can be seen that the management do their responsibilities to their employee to secure safety and health at the workplace during this post pandemic period.

5.5 Time frame of participation of employees in discussion of Safety Policies

A question that sought to find out from respondents how often did employees allowed to participate in discussion with regards to safety and health at the workplace.

Table.11. Time frame of participation of employees in discussion of Safety Policies

Communication Mode	Number of Respondents	Percentage %
Daily	4	6.5
Weekly	11	17.7
Monthly	18	29.0
Quarterly	11	17.7

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Semi-Annually	6	9.7
Annually	12	19.4
Total	**62**	**100.0**

From the above table 11, 4 respondents representing 6.5% indicated that participation of employee in discussion with regards to safety and health are conducted on daily basis.

Eleven respondents each for weekly and quarterly indicated that these activities are conducted weekly and quarterly respectively. However, 18 respondents which represents 29.0% showed that there is definite participation of employee in discussion with regards to safety and health are conducted on monthly basis while 6 respondents which represents 9.7% showed that there is definite participation of employee in discussion with regards to safety and health are conducted on semi-annually basis. Lastly, 12 respondents representing 19.4% indicated that participation of employee in discussion with regards to safety and health are conducted on annually basis.

The employee indicated that though participation of employee in discussion with regards to safety and health is carried out, it is not done on a routine basis. It is important to conduct a participation of employee in discussion with regards to safety and health on a routine basis so that results can be compared accurately.

5.6 Response by the Management on Reported Safety Issues

A question that sought to find out from respondents how readily response the management to an issue about safety and health at workplace that have already been discovered and reported.

Table.12. Response by the Management on Reported Safety Issues

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage %
Readily	50	80.7
Reluctantly	3	4.8
Do not know	9	14.5
Total	**62**	**100.0**

The table 12 showed that 50 (80.7%) respondents reported that the management responds readily to information on safety once they are reported. A total of 3 (4.8%) respondents said that the management was reluctant, while 9 (14.5%) respondents did not know how the management responds to reported safety issues. We can therefore deduce that majority of the respondents (80.7%) reported that the management responds readily to reported issues on health and safety in the workplace.

VI. CONCLUSION

There cannot be any effective occupational health and safety policies if both management and employees fail to perform their respective responsibilities. The management is supposed to file government accident reports, maintain records on health and safety issues, posting safety notices and legislative information, providing education and training on health and safety.

The employee on the other hand is required to comply with all health and safety rules, knowing that the person ultimately responsible for his/her health and safety is himself/herself. Employee are required to wear protective clothing, use equipment and tools provided for their work, and report any contravention of the law by management.

Also, the employee has the right to refuse unsafe work. Accidents are costly both to the affected worker and the organization. Therefore, every effort should be made in order to avoid them from happening at the work place.

Lastly, the employee is involved in discussing safety policies in marginal ways in their work places. It is worth noting that the employees are policy implementers and implementation cannot be complete without full knowledge of the policies to be implemented.

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