

# Work Place Environment: Implications of Workplace Accidents and the Necessity for Safety cum Health Programmes in Organizations

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**Abstract:** Every employee is entitled to work in a setting where jeopardy to his health and security are suitably controlled. Hence, employers have a liability to consult with their workers or representatives on health and safety matters. Notwithstanding the laws mandating employers to guarantee the protection and health of their employees, several employees have been victims of work place accidents. While some have died as a product of an industrial accident, others have sustained different extent of injuries. The study examined the dimensions and implications of workplace accidents and the necessity for safety and health programme in establishments. The methodology of the study is qualitative and descriptive. Relevant data for the study were gathered through secondary source. The data generated were analyzed using descriptive-qualitative approach. The findings of the study, among other things, revealed that while work place accidents are of varied nature with wide adverse consequences, both employers and employees have significant roles to play in ensuring workplace safety and health. Moreover, the findings showed that an accident free plant or organization with good health and safety programmes enjoys certain benefits such as motivated workforce, increased productivity and profitability, cost savings, lower staff turnover, lesser absenteeism, lower insurance costs and good corporate reputation.

**Key words:** workplace, safety and health programme, employer, employee, accident

## I. INTRODUCTION

Human resources are critical assets of creative enterprise. The health and safety of workers in organizations are not only paramount to the workers but also to the organizations and employers of labour. A worker who leaves his/her home to work place milieu apparently hopes to come back home safe and sound and healthy. Nonetheless, scores of employees have lost their fingers, ears, eyes, limbs and lives in course of employment operation. A report from International Labour Organization indicates that an estimated two million occupational fatalities occurred across the globe yearly (2003b). Hamalainen, Takala, and Saarela (2006) state that the overall rate of occupational accidents, fatal and non fatal, is estimated at 270 million. In accordance with the provision of Nigeria Factories Act and Labour Law (1987), it is binding for employers under employment contract to provide safe system in place of work and to take apt steps to guarantee safety of

the workers. The employer should have overall liability for the protection of workers safety and health, and provide leadership for occupational safety and health activities in the organization (ILO, 2001). In fact, the Factories Act requires an employer to guard the health and safety of workers at work place by ensuring effective safety and health organization. Employers must ensure security of workers from injury to their health and dangers of work and machinery by providing protected workplace and work equipment, by complying with the conditions of health, safety and occupational health and ensuring that machines and work equipment are installed and kept in safe conditions (Factories Act, Cap FILFN 2004). Employers who neglect employees' health and safety risk prosecution.

Employees on the other hands have to take reasonable care of their own health and security by complying with the safety and health rules as provided by the employers or supervisors. An employee has the obligation to take rational care not to put himself and other workers at risk by what he does or does not do in the course of his job. He is expected to co-operate with the employer, to ensure that he obtains proper training and understanding of the organizations' health and safety policy. Notwithstanding plethora of Labour and Factories Acts, both locally and internationally, work place setting safety and health of employees has not been properly addressed in some organizations. Accidents at workplace have continued unabated and many have died as a result of such accidents or sustained various degrees of injuries which have implications for the progress of the employees, employers and society at large. This study explored the nature of workplace accident and its implications view a to underscoring the necessity for good health and safety system in productive organizations.

## II. RESEARCH PROBLEM

Despite the fact that guaranteed health and safety of workers are considered strategic to the achievement of employees' and organizational goals, some employers and human resources managers consider it as additional production outlay to organizations. Such employers give little or no attention to providing the workers with adequate personal protective

equipment and secured working environment. Besides, some managers of human resources who appreciate the significance of good health and safety programme are not conversant with the processes and techniques involved in designing and implementing effective programme for adequate protection of employees and enhance productivity. It is against this background that this paper attempts to systematically explore the dimensions and implications of workplace accidents and the necessity for safety and health programme in establishments.

### III. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Theoretically, the study provides human resources students and scholars with information that will be relevant in further researches by widening the boundary of knowledge on the theoretical underpinning of workplace safety and health programme. Moreover, it enhances the knowledge of workers and employers on the expectations from them with regard to workplace safety and health. Practically, it offers a useful guide to human resources managers and employers who want to embark on evolvement and execution of effective workplace environment safety and health programme for accomplishment of employees' and organizational goals. It as well exposes human resources managers to the fundamental consequences and benefits of safe and healthy working environment with a view to encouraging them to consider safety and health policy as essential cum integral part of organizational growth strategy.

### IV. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework that guides the analysis of the study is occupational safety and health standard theory developed by International Labour Organization (2006) which set out framework for promoting national preventive and safety culture. The theory attempts to explicate the necessity for safe and healthy working environment to both employees and organizations. The theory views workplace safety and health policy as essential integral process of organizations and prerequisites for enhance productivity as well as accomplishment of workers' and organizational objectives. A good health and safety programme involves coherent steps which ensure that the objectives of the programme are attained at minimal cost. The theory posits that it is strategic for workers' health and safety objectives to be considered and integrated into organizations' development and training programme. This ensures that the organization remains competitive and has comparative advantage over its competitors in the market because of motivated and sound workforce.

### V. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION AND ANALYSIS

According to World Health Organization (1995) cited in Tekele and Mengesha (2006) occupational safety and health can be defined as a multidisciplinary activity targeted at protection and promotion of the health of workers by eliminating occupational factors and condition hazardous to

health and security at work; enhancement of physical, mental and social wellbeing of workers and support for the development and maintenance of their working capacity as well as professional and social improvement at work; development and promotion of sustainable work background and work organization. Health refers to the general wellbeing of individual. It means that an individual enjoys freedom from disease or infirmity and have a sense of mental, physical and social well being.

Industrial safety or employee safety refers to protection of employees from danger of workplace mishap. Occupational safety deals with all issues of physical, mental and social safety in a work place. Safety is a feeling of security. Safe workers work without fright of danger or injury. Occupational health and safety Act is chiefly designed to shelter employees from wellbeing and safety hazard on the job. It sets out the responsibilities for employers and right of employees in ensuring workplace safety. The Act as well set out procedures for handling workplace risk and provided for enforcement of the law when there is no observance. Workplace safety programme describes policies and procedures in place to ensure the safety and health of employees within a workplace. It entails risk identification and control according to government standards and ongoing safety training and education for workers. Safety measures protect workers as well as equipment and business property. Identification of work place safety hazard and issues is an important step in protecting workers. Common workplace concerns include presence of harmful chemical, mechanical problems, pollution, limited visibility, danger of falling and weather-related hazard

Work place environment is a vital element in discussing performance and health of employee in an organization. An optimal work place design is where the work place surroundings support the needs of employees and where employees work in a conducive environment to the employees' capacities (Makhbul, 2012). Environment refers to man's closest surroundings which he can manipulate for his survival and existence (Edem, Akpan and Pepple, 2017). The environment or setting in which a worker operates has significant impact on the performance and productivity of a worker. A poorly designed or managed work place milieu can adversely affect the productivity, morale and overall performance of worker. Workplace embraces the setting in which workers executes their tasks or any assigned role in organizations. Task executed in the place of work can be directly influenced by the physical environment. The physical environment as an element of place of work setting has direct effect on human sense and can influence interpersonal interaction and productivity. The vital workplace factors that impact on the employee's performance include job aids; goal setting; supervisor support; workplace incentive; feed backs on performance; definite process and other physical, social and environmental factors. The physical factors such as poor layout or overcrowding can result in accident. Moreover, the

environment elements such as temperature, lighting and ventilation can negatively affect workers by causing work stress and loss of fatigue. In creating a healthy work place environment certain factors have to be given cognizance: workplace culture; physical setting and occupational health and safety; health and lifestyle practice; supportive workplace milieu. Poor workplace environment and safety tend to result in accidents which have considerable impact on the workers, employers and organization.

An accident is an unintentionally-caused event (Safeopedia, 2021). It is a sudden and unwanted event caused by an outside influence that causes harm to people and result from interaction among people or between people and object. Work place accident entails unplanned, unexpected and controllable event that cause injury to workers or equipment, or both. It is an abrupt and unpredicted occurrence in industry that disrupts the methodical process of work. According to Factory Act 1948 cited in (Jain, 2015) industrial accident is an occurrence in an industrial establishment causing bodily harm to a person which makes him unfit to resume his duties within 48 hours of its occurrence

#### VI. WORKPLACE ACCIDENT: TYPES, CAUSES AND EFFECTS

Workplace accidents occur in different forms and could be caused by variety of factors. The effects of workplace accidents on the employees, employers and organizations cannot be underestimated. Thus, underneath are explication on the types, causes and effects of accident at workplace.

##### *Types /Forms of Industrial Accidents*

The ever increasing mechanization, modernization and advancement in all facets of human undertaking have made industrial work complicated. This has caused increased menace to human life in industries through accident and injuries of different types and degree. Taxonomy of accident may perhaps depend upon the severity, durability and degree of injury sustained by the person or persons involved. Accidents that result in death or everlasting or protracted incapacitation are called major accident. A scratch or cut that does not render the worker disable is referred to as minor accident. Minor accident does not strictly disable the involved employee or person. A simple cut or a deep cut in the leg or hand may not instantaneously disable the worker but may develop disability thereafter (Aswathappa, 2002).

An accident may be internal or external. When an employee sustains injury with external sign of it, it is external injury but injury without external indication of it such as a fissure in the bone is identified as internal. If a worker falls or an object falls on the employee, it is probable the employee may show outer signs of injury. Nevertheless, the employee may have fractured a bone or strained nerves or muscle, which is an inner injury. When an injury renders an employee debilitated for a short duration such as an hour, a day, or a week, the accident is considered temporary. In other words, if

a worker who sustained injury recovers from such disability after some period of time, such injury is temporary but if the injury is such that the worker will never recover fully; that is making the employee disable forever, it is called permanent accident (Jain, 2015). Disability resulting from accident may be classified as partial or total, fatal or non fatal. Fatal accident is the one that result in death within one year while non fatal prevent the worker from work operation for 48 hours or more. Non reportable accident is the one that permit the employee to return to work immediately or within 48 hours.

Accidents and injuries at work place can also be classified based on the nature and causes of the accidents and injuries. In this way; the following types are obtainable:

*Slips, Trips and fall:* Slippery plane in factory or office can cause falls. Another hazard for some employee is falling while working at height such as falls from ladder, falls from gallows and other platform. This may result in fissure, pull, knee injuries etc. *Muscle Strain:* Strained muscles are injuries associated with regular lifting of heavy items or equipment by employees. Back and neck strains are common and often occurred during working. *Hitting by Falling Object:* Many workers are vulnerable to being hit by falling objects. This is common to those that work in warehousing type of environment where objects may fall from shelves or where they are stored to hit the employee. This can cause grave injuries mostly if the individual was hit by weighty objects. Building collapse may also hit or trap an employee or employees working on the building. *Repetitive Strain Injury:* This result from any recurring motion of joint. Although some workers don't seem to view repetitive strain injury serious, its collective impact in some cases may be severe. This type of injury is general to those that recurrently use keyboard at work place or drivers of vehicle who engage in long distance journey on regular basis. *Crashes and Collisions:* There are accidents resulting from crash and collision of cars, Lorries, and other moveable apparatus. The collision or clash may result in serious corporal harm or death. *Cut and Laceration:* Equipment such as saws, trimmers, razor, cutlass, knives and hoes can cause painful cut. The most frequent causes of these lacerations comprise poor training, inadequate safety scheme and failure to put on fitting protection materials. *Inhaling Toxic Fumes:* People that work with hazardous chemicals may have the risk of developing skin or eye reactions, as well as possible severe injuries, when they are exposed to the chemicals without adequate protection. Inhaling toxic fumes may also result in cancer or damage of respiratory organs. There could be also cases of chemical burns. *Exposure to Loud Noise:* Industrial workers that are exposed continually to loud noise while at work may suffer deafness. Apart from deafness, loud noise cause discomfort and stress if it is not controlled. *Walking into Object:* A worker unintentionally may walk into sharp end of object such door, table, wall or cabinet, office equipment etc which may cause injuries to the worker. *Fight at Work:* Fights in the work place can obviously result in serious injury. Bickering at workplace may over a



time deteriorate into corporeal confrontation which may result in harm sustained in the course of the fight. *Burns*: A worker may be a victim of fire outbreak in work place. Burns can also result from chemical explosion or exposure.

#### *Causes of Workplace Accidents*

Occupational accident and injuries may stem from varieties of factors. Nevertheless, these factors can be grouped into unsafe condition; unsafe act and unsafe situation and climatic conditions.

*Unsafe Condition*: Accident may occur as a result of malfunctioning tools, apparatus, material and machines. Accident arises when there are improper placement of equipment, defective layout and siting of plant, inadequate lighting arrangement, poor ventilation, unsafe storage, insufficient safety or protection gadget. Moreover, psychological elements such as stress, anxiety, tiredness and over labouring expose workers to accident. In an industry, the rate of accident have a propensity to be high in work that involves hand lift track, wheel barrows, gears and pulley, saws, nails, harmer, knives, razors, chisel and screw drivers, fire etc.

*Unsafe Act*: Lack of knowledge, skills, commitment, and interest may result in workplace accident. An employee's wrong attitude, physical deficiency or poor handling of equipment may cause injuries to the employee. An employee who fails to follow firmly the safety practice or who fail to wear accurate protection material provided by the employer is susceptible to accident. Moreover, an employer who does not provide his workers with right information and supervision to guarantee safety exposes the worker to accident. This act of negligence of duty and responsibility by both the employer and employee cause accident at work place.

*Unsafe Situation and Climatic Condition*: Excessive heat, high temperature, dusty fume, slippery floor and unhealthy environment can lead to industrial accident. Excessive heat at work office due to poor exposure to air or climatic condition can lead to suffocation or uneasiness. A polluted environment may expose the worker to inhaling toxic fume that is detrimental to the body. In case of slippery environment, the workers are vulnerable to injuries arising from falls.

Generally, the unsafe acts of an employees that may cause industrial accident include: working without clearance; failure to hearken to warning; working at risky speed; making safety device inoperative; failure to use personal protective devices or attire; distraction; working on precarious equipment; taking unsafe position, using unsafe equipment; unsafe loading etc. According to Dugas (2017), in his study of accident in a chemical plant, the main causes of accident could be classified into four: human error, improper training, manufacturing defect and improper maintenance.

#### *Effects of Employee Accident*

Work place accidents have considerable effects on the employees, organizations and society in general. Specifically some of the impacts are as follows:

*Increased Cost*: Frequent cases of accident in an industry add to the running cost of the industry. The industry has to pay medical treatment bill for the injured persons, fix damaged apparatus and tools; pay legal penalty. In case of an accident that involves death or permanent incapacitation, the organization is bound to pay enormous amount as compensation to the victim or his family. At times, the matter involves litigation which requires legal fees for engaging the service of competent lawyers. There is legal penalty if the verdict is against the organization. Frequent accidents increase insurance cost in the involved establishment.

*Reduced Profitability*: Profits made by an organization do not only hinge on demand for its service or products but also on the cost of production. If the cost of production is high, the profit level may be low. Thus, since accident increases the running cost for an organization, the profit level of such organization will likely decline. The money used in settling medical bill, legal fees, compensation and repair of damaged equipment would have formed part of the organizations profit if not for the accidents that occurred.

*Loss of Staff and Recruitment Difficulty*: Accidents that cause death or permanent disability lead to loss of employees. Besides, an industry that has history of recurrent workplace accident may face challenges in recruiting workers since no rational prospective employee would like to be employed in an organization where workplace health and safety is neglected. The wish of rational employee is to go to work and return safe. Thus, an industry known for frequent accident or neglect of health and safety rules does not attract potential employees mainly those with great competence and high achieving capacity. Those that may decide to be employed notwithstanding the high rate of accidents in such industry may not be competent and productive. Besides, for fear of being injured in such industry, its already employed workers may choose to resign in large number, thereby creating a situation of high staff turnover.

*Low Productivity*: Accidents affects the productive capacity of the affected employee. An accident employee does not contribute to production between the period of the accident and time of full recovery. Such worker stays out of work for a period of time which ranges from hours, days, months, weeks and years. Within this period, the affected work makes no input and this invariable affects the production level of the organization. The impact on productivity becomes high if the affected employee or employees are high achievers that are committed to the goals of the organization. At times, owing to the nature of the affected worker's operation and the required skill in his field of operation, the organization may find it difficult to get a substitute either within or outside the

organization. The death of a highly skilled worker in an organization, no doubt, will have substantial effects on the productivity rate.

*Loss of Reputation:* An organization that has frequent occurrence of accident loses its corporate reputation. Such situation creates bad image of the organization in a manner that may not only affect the demand for its products and services but also the willingness of prospective employees to seek employment in the organization. Thus an organization with bad reputation arising from neglect of health and safety of work is bound to suffer high employee turnover and recruitment difficulties.

*Loss of Wages:* When an employee involved in workplace accident loses his/her job owing to bodily harm or injury sustained, the employee's wages cease. Such employee even though may be rewarded but has lost his/her steady means of living. This state of affairs does not only affect the standard of living of the affected employee and his immediate family but also others who depend on him for survival. Thus, the loss of wages by employee affects socio-economic life and contribution to the economy. The wages the employee earns which are usually injected into the economy via his expenditure cease and consequently, the economy is affected owing to decline in aggregate demand.

*Disability and Death:* Many employees across the globe have suffered varied degree of injury in their workplace (ILO,2015). Some have lost their fingers, eyes, limbs and lives. A permanently disabled worker does not only pass through body pains but also psychological trauma. Accident at workplace that result in loss of mental balance, limb, eyes, arms etc may render the affected employees incompetent for several activities both economically, psychologically and socially. Some victims are restricted in their home doing little or nothing because they are debilitated. The worst case scenario is when death is involved. The immediate family of the deceased and those who depends on the deceased person for survival are put in a situation of agony, grief and economic difficulty which affect their health. They may have not only lost their beloved one but also their life blood and protector.

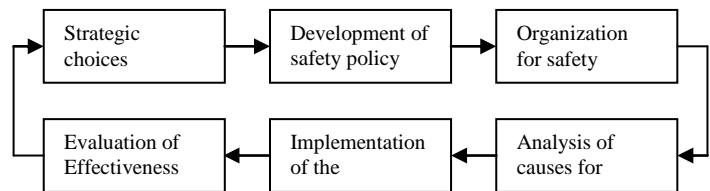
## VII. EMPLOYEE SAFETY PROGRAMMES PROCESS

The safety of workers is significant for the progress of any organization. A safe worker is an asset to the organization just as unsafe employee becomes a liability. Safety means liberty from occurrence or danger of injury or loss. Thus, industrial safety is concerned with protecting employees from industrial hazard and accident. Job safety involves association between workers and work, material, tools, equipment, as well as the environment. Safety programme is concerned with the prevention of accidents and reduction in loss and harm to persons and property consequent upon accidents.

Organization's safety programmes are often guided by five fundamental tenets. First, the safety programme should take cognizance that industrial accidents occur as

result of varied factors. Thus, the causes of accident have to be traced to the basis which is usually poor training facilities; poor management system; inadequate supervision; unsafe act; overlook of safety modus operandi etc. Another central tenet that should guide safety programme of an enterprise is the realization that the most paramount role of safety programmes is to find out possible dangers, provide adequate safety material and procedure and to take quick remedial action. This is achievable if the organization has methodical process for executing safety checks, inspection and investigation; comprehensive and effective system for accident reporting; adequate accident records and data; proper channel for motivating managers, supervisors and employees to be safety conscious by paying adequate attention to safety issue. It is also an important principle that the safety policies of an organization should be formulated by the top management officers who should as well be constantly involved in monitoring safety performance and ensuring that corrective measure is taken when the need arises. Besides, the top management and supervisors should be fully held responsible for safety performance in the working department, unit, and section under their control. Last but not least among the fundamental principle that must govern safety programme is that all workers must be provided with adequate training in safe approach to work and should regularly undergo education and guidance on eradicating safety risks and accident prevention. A good safety programme usually undergo through some process otherwise known as element of safety programme.

Figure 1: Safety Process/Element



Source (Aswathappa, 2002:423)

The first step in safety programme is for the management to make a strategic choice; that is taking decision concerning safety of their employees. Some of the strategic choices available to organization from which decisions relating to health and safety programme for workers emanate include:

- i. Managers should establish the level of protection the organization will offer to the workers. Some industries owing to monetary reasons considers minimum level of protection whereas some prefer optimum level of protection
- ii. Managers can choose to make the safety programme formal or informal. Informal regulations are executed via peer pressure or good training whereas formal programmes have written rules and are cautiously monitored
- iii. Managers may be proactive or reactive in designing safety programme plan for the protection of workers.

Being proactive means that the manager seeks to enhance the safety of the workers before the need to do so arise; while reactive managers take safety measure after accidents have happened.

- iv. Managers may choose to employ workers' safety as a marketing strategy for the organization. This strategy involves making public what measures the organization have taken to enhance safety of its workers and how hazard free the plant is to work with. (William et.al, 1993).

The second step in formulating and designing a safety programme is to have a safety policy. A policy stipulates the organization's objectives and designation of authority and responsibilities for their attainment. A safety policy has to embody a statement of the organization's intents and the strategy for achieving the intent or objective. The intent declaration must stress four crucial points: the safety of workers and the public is of upper most necessity; safety rules have to be formulated in acquiescence with existing law; all efforts must be made to absorb all managers, supervisors and workers in formulation and effecting of safety procedure; safety will take precedence over expediency.

After evolving a safety programme, the next step is to set up an organization safety which serves as a means for realizing the intent of the organization. Organization set up safety committees which consist of workers across the organization. Ordinarily, safety committees have consultative power and are assigned duty such as reviewing of safety procedure; recommending measures for preventing particular safety and health risk, probing accidents, fielding safety-related complaint from workers and following up statutory compliance. Some organizations employ the service of safety experts to develop and perform the regular activities relating to safety programme. It is the duty of Human resource units in an organization to co-ordinate the actions of those involved in safety procedure. The top management is profoundly involved in maintaining workers safety. In the event of accident, it is the managing director that is hold accountable and may be sanctioned with fine, imprisonment or both as the law stipulates. Nowadays, risk management is receiving serious attention in some organizations. Although the most common way of protecting oneself is insurance, insurance scope is restricted and expensive. Thus, risk management is imperative. The task of risk management is to evaluate all risks for frequency, probability and severity and to take adequate measures to avert or decrease the effect of possible losses and as well monitor the outcome.

The fourth step is concerned with analysis of causes of accidents. Accidents occur owing to diversity of reasons or causes. The causes of accident can be generally grouped into human related factor and machine or mechanical related factors. Human failure causes accident when workers overlook safety measures and indulge in perilous actions, while mechanical or physical related accident involves faulty

mechanical or physical conditions that cause accident. Accidents can be explained in terms of frequency, severity and incidence.

Implementation of safety programme is the fifth steps or element in safety programme process. For implementation, the safety programme must cover certain important areas. In other words, safety policy due for execution must cover issues such as procedure for reporting accident and risk; arrangement for informing employees about safe working methods and for training workers in safety matters; general rules on safe working attitude; arrangement for checking new machinery and material; safety inspections; maintenance of equipment and provision of adequate inspection and testing arrangement; suggestion on safety matter; provision of personal protective material and rules as to its use; special rules for work done at a height, in confined spaces, on certain electrical equipment or unguarded machinery; good housekeeping requirements covering storage facilities, adequate space for machinery and plant, and the provision of gangways (Armstrong, 1988).

The final step in safety programme process is programme evaluation. Programme evaluation is concerned with the assessment of the implemented programme so as to ascertain the extent to which the programme was able to achieve its expected objectives. It is aimed at determining the effectiveness of safety programme. Generally speaking the various methods of evaluating safety programme can be grouped into organic or systemic method. The organic procedure attempt to assess now well safety system is formulated and executed. It is concerned with the merits of the programme's elements and their degree of execution. Systemic method on the other hand is concerned with the outcome of the programme, which is the actualization of the goals the programme is formulated to pursue. In general; the organic method seeks to determine issues such as: whether the programme successfully changed unsafe behaviour; have safety attitude been bettered; have injury-producing physical circumstance been rectified; are there compliance with provision relating to safety.

#### VIII. EMPLOYEE HEALTH AND WELLNESS PROGRAMME

Although there seems to be diverse between employee health programme and wellness programme both are closely associated and are used interchangeably. The term wellness programme tends to focus on disease prevention and management, health assessment and other efforts that target high-risk individual within an organization. Wellness programme is a programme that assists workers to remain healthy or enhance their health. Wellness programme considerably centre on the idea of preventive care which is chiefly formulated to save employers money in the long run because the common belief is that if people are getting usual medical checkup, adhering to their prescribed medication, health problems can be prevented wholly or at least managed

before they become expensive. (Institute for Imaginative Nutrition, 2021). Health is a status of mental, physical and social well being and not simply the absence of disease or illness. The health of a worker in organization is the workers physical, mental and social balance. Health and wellness go together in the search for complete wellbeing. Wellness is the active process or actions that lead to good health which is the expected outcome. Thus, employee wellness programmes are initiatives executed by employers with the aim of maintaining and promoting the workers health and general well being. Workplace health programmes are coordinated and comprehensive set of health promotion and protection strategic implemented at workplace.

Health and wellbeing are assets for workers as well as for managers and employers. Healthy workers are more satisfied, motivated and productive. Such workers are more safety conscious and regular to duty. Organization with well implemented wellness and health programme apart from having better company culture, higher employee recruitment and retention witness reduced cost due to ill health and injury. Ill-health and poor wellbeing negatively affects the workers and organization via decline in production, high rate of unsafe acts, increased absenteeism and negative company image. Workers have to be mentally, physically and socially balanced in order to make positive contribution to the realization of the employee and organization objectives.

As a result of the benefit of employee health and well being, management of some organization initiates and provides some wellness and health services to their workers. Examples of some wellness programme include stress management, health screening, fitness or yoga class/exercise, creating nap room, ensuring healthy lunches and snacks, walking around, gymnasium etc. (Talentyft, 2019). Health service provided to workers ranges from first-aid equipment to full medical facilities. In some establishment, the workers are provided with well equipped treatment center with doctors, nurses and other health workers who many work either on part time or full time basis. The National Health Insurance Scheme in Nigeria is aimed at providing workers access to quality health care. Steps for implementing a successful employee wellness and health programme include: setting a goal that will benefit both the company and staff; setting up a committed team to handle the project of formulating comprehensive health and well being programme; collection of data on relevant issues to be addressed from the employee; building plan with the goals of wellness programmes and strategies for execution; communication of the details of the programme to the employee with emphasis on significance of wellness; acquiring feedback and adjusting the programme based on feedback for improvement. According to Ross (2019) the steps involves in implementing employee health improvement programme are: Collecting base line data that supply precise data on employee health; developing personalized health report using the information gathered so as to identify any existing or potential health issue

of individuals; building an aggregate work force health profile using the data from personal health survey to create accurate snapshots of the general health of the work force; introducing an organized programme of health improvement activities such as fitness, lunch, screening, etc to help workers manage their risk and improve their health; establishing a home base for wellness by promoting information on need for wellness.

#### IX. EMPLOYERS' AND EMPLOYEES' RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN PROMOTING WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY

Employers and employees in organization have some roles and responsibilities to play in promoting workplace health and safety. Statutorily, every employee is entitled to work in setting where risk/to their health and safety are properly controlled. Employers have duty to consult with their worker or other representatives on health and safety issues. An employer is required to protect the health and safety of workers at work place in line with the provisions of factories act and labour law. It is mandatory for employers and management under employment agreement to offer safe system and place of work and to take steps to guarantee the safety of workers. Employers have to maintain cleanness in the factory and the factory must not be overcrowded during operation. There must be adequate ventilation, lighting, drainage of floor and sanitary conveniences. Employers by law must ensure safety of workers from injury to health and danger of work and machinery by providing safe work place and work equipment; by abiding by the condition of health, safety and occupational health and ensuring that machines and work equipment are properly installed and kept in safe conditions. Moreover, it is obligatory for employer to provide free personal protective equipment to workers. According to the factory Act, if a worker are employed in any process involving excessive exposure to wet or to injurious or offensive substance, suitable protective clothing and appliance including where necessary suitable gloves, footwear, goggles and head covers are provided and maintained for the use of such worker (Factories Act, Cap Filfn 2004). The employer must provide adequate training to the workers and inform them about any known workplace hazards, existing control for those hazards and safe work place practice. Employers must involve workers in the process of hazard identification and must communicate to workers their health and safety rights and responsibilities.

It is the right of employee to ensure that any risk to his health and safety is adequately controlled by the employer. Employees have the right to be provided with any personal protective and safety equipment free of charge and should stop work without any punitive action if they have reasonable concern about their safety. Workers have the right to tell the employer about any health and safety apprehension they have and should not be sanction if they report to health and safety agency if the employer ignored their health and safety alarm. Employees are entitled to time off from work during the



working day and have annual paid holiday as well as rest break during the working day. Workers have the responsibility to undergo regular training on proper use of equipment and be familiar with the risks and hazards associated with the use of such equipment. In fact, a worker must accept and or request training for the job and be adequately trained before starting the job. The training must include how to respond to disaster situation. An employee is to take necessary precaution to protect his own health and safety and that of his co-workers. They must comply with occupation safety and health regulation as well as the organization's safety and health guidelines.

#### X. IMPERATIVES OF WORKPLACE SAFETY AND HEALTH SYSTEM

The significance of employee safety and health cannot be overemphasized. An organization with safe and healthy workers has invaluable assets. A worker who is healthy and safe in his/her work environment tends to exhibit high spirits of morale, satisfaction and motivation. With deep level of motivation and satisfaction, the worker concentration and commitment to duty is enhanced and the attendant result is increased productivity and efficiency. Productivity loss related to absenteeism arising from ill health and injury is low in an organization with effective health/wellness and safety procedure. Workers in such organization are less likely to miss work without proper reason. Absenteeism engenders loss of productivity which undermines the profit of the organization. Healthy behaviour such as regular exercise, balanced nutrition and reduced tobacco intake lower health risk and reduce health care cost. Thus, good health and safety programme has the capacity to reduce employee related health care expenditure and insurance. Staff turnover rate in organization can be affected by the nature of health and safety measures in operation. Organizations that have poor health and safety measure are likely going to have high rate of employee turnover because no rational and competent worker would like to remain in an organization that exposes him/her to personal harm and disease. Therefore, reduction in staff turnover is one of the benefits associated with good and safety programme because workers in such organizations will want to remain since they are well taken care of in terms of safety and health. Such workers feel appreciated and satisfied thereby having high morale and enthusiasm to work in the organization. A study by American Psychology Association show that 51% of the workers sampled agreed that they are unlikely to leave a company with good health procedure (Talentyft, 2019).

Besides improved retention of employee, good health programme gives an organization advantage in employee recruitment. Good health and safety system enhances company's brand and attract top talents that give the company comparative advantage in the competitive market. Most employees, particularly, the competent and highly productive ones are likely to consider health and wellness when choosing

employers. Such company also has high level of successful referral because employees in such a company will more likely recommend the company to prospective employee that is those seeking employment. Better company culture and team spirit among workers can be achieved through good health/wellness programme such sports, entertainment, group lunch etc. These activities that enhance health bring workers together and strengthen their relationship.

#### XI. CONCLUSION

Workers' safety and health has a statutory support. Every employee is entitled to work in environment where risks to his health and safety are adequately taken care of by the employers. Both employees and employers have important roles to play in promoting safety and health in working environment. Accidents in work place are caused by several factors. Accidents leads to reduced profitability, high staff turnover, absenteeism, low productivity, high cost of production, disability and death, loss of reputation. Thus, organizations are expected to take adequate measures in ensuring that accident at work place is eliminated or reduced to the minimum. Promoting safety and health of workers through good health and safety programmes enhances motivation and satisfaction of workers, reduced workers turnover and absenteeism, enhance productivity and efficiency, reduced health care cost and promote the image of the organizations.

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