

Practices of ensuring health and safety management programs in Ukrainian companies

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Abstract

Introduction: In the current situation (military and ecological threats, pandemic COVID-19), the health and safety management role is increasing. Providing socially responsible, resource-efficient, and environmentally sensitive workplaces, safe working conditions, improving staff health, and reducing stress and occupational diseases are the essential tasks of human resources management (HRM).

Aim: To study the implementation of personnel health and safety practices in Ukrainian companies and develop profiles of the leading organizations.

Method: A sociological survey was conducted to assess the spread of personnel health and safety practices in Ukraine.

Findings: Creating environmentally-friendly working conditions is the most popular practice in Ukrainian companies. Two-thirds (66.7 %) of respondents confirmed that the organizations implement such practices. Measures to improve the employees' health and reduce stress and occupational disease caused by an unhealthy environment are less spread. 58.8 % of respondents indicated the introduction of these practices. The less common are practices of creating resource-saving and environmentally sensitive workplaces. Only 43.1 % of respondents pointed out that the organizations create such workplaces. The profiles of the leading organizations in safety management practices were developed. Experience in health and safety management should be examined and disseminated to HRM policies.

Key Words: Health and Safety Management, Environmentally-Friendly Working Conditions, Resource-Saving and Environmentally Sensitive Workplaces

1. INTRODUCTION

In the current situation (military and ecological threats, pandemic COVID-19), the health and safety management role is increasing.

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Therefore, providing socially responsible, resource-efficient, and environmentally sensitive workplaces, safe working conditions, improving staff health, and reducing the stress and occupational diseases caused by an unhealthy environment are the essential tasks of human resources management (HRM). Therefore, HRM should aim at changing the organizational aspects of the labor activities: preventing professional burnout, reducing threats to life at work, and maintaining the physical, mental, and psychological employees' health (Tsymbaliuk *et al.*, 2021). Herewith organizations need to look into the issue of employees' health and safety with a strategic view (Alzyoud *et al.*, 2020). Work safety is a multidisciplinary field that deals with employees' health, safety, and well-being (Ullah *et al.*, 2021) and evaluation, prevention, and control of the risks concerning the performance of work (Pinosová *et al.*, 2021).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Workplace health and safety management issues are exacerbated by the driving Industry 4.0 technologies (Badri, 2018). Employees' health and safety have become particularly critical in the context of COVID-19. It, first of all, concerns certain categories of workers: older health employees and persons with pre-existing medical conditions; who are pregnant and at higher risk of developing serious illness; employees with mental health conditions; staff with increased workload and prolonged hours (International Labor Organization & World Health Organization, 2021).

Employers need to take positive steps to ensure health, safety, and employees' well-being (Peek, 2020). Managers have to constantly control unsafe conditions or practices and take immediate action for eliminating bad influences on workers' healthy (Jonathan & Mbogo, 2016).

Research results reveal the positive influence of health and safety management programs on health management savings and low absenteeism (Peek, 2020), employees' motivation, quality of products and services (Morgado *et al.*, 2019), productivity and performance (Salguero-Caparrós *et al.* (2020), economic and social development at the global and national levels (Pinosová *et al.*, 2021).

Managers are responsible for the implementation of health and safety policies (Terziev *et al.*, 2020). In this regard, the major issue is

developing occupational health-care awareness of management (Yanar *et al.*, 2019).

The goal of work safety is to provide personnel with a healthy work condition where they enjoy physical, psychological, economic, and social safety while fulfilling their tasks (Ullah *et al.*, 2021).

Health and safety management programs are associated with different sectors: corporate sector, policies sector, human rights, and economic development (Yanar *et al.*, 2019). The occupational safety and health management system include policies, organization, planning, performance, assessment, and guidelines for improvement (Terziev *et al.*, 2020). Occupational safety and safety programs can include job safety, coworker safety, supervisor safety, and management safety practices (Ullah *et al.*, 2021).

Peek (2020) recommends educating themselves and employees on environmental issues in business, inviting ecological experts to handle health issues in the workplace, and determining cost-effective ways to handle environmental issues. For this purpose, managers can establish safety committees consisting of health and safety specialists who suggest advice on improving health and safety policies and procedures (Jonathan & Mbogo, 2016).

Important occupational health problems that need to be addressed at the global level include inherent chemical, biological, physical, ergonomic, and psychosocial risks (Pinosová *et al.*, 2021). Recording of occupational diseases is of extra value in developing preventive actions in the work. To enable a comparison of notification approaches used in different countries, the harmonization of epidemiological surveillance systems is of great importance (Turner & Mehlum, 2018; Molen *et al.*, 2020).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research objective is to study the implementation of personnel health and safety practices in Ukrainian companies and develop profiles of the leading organizations. The study focuses on finding the spread of creating environmentally-friendly working conditions, resource-saving and environmentally sensitive workplaces, improving the employees' health, and reducing stress and occupational disease.

For assessing the spread of personnel health and safety practices in Ukrainian companies, the authors conducted a sociological survey (in the form of a questionnaire).

To provide reliable information by the respondents, we stated in the letter and the questionnaire that the survey is anonymous, and we guarantee the confidentiality of the information provided.

For assessing the spread of personnel health and safety practices in Ukrainian companies, we used a standard symmetric scale of responses to the proposed statements: “strongly agree”, “rather agree”, “rather disagree”, “strongly disagree”, and “difficult to answer”.

The data collection process took place from April to August 2021. For this purpose, the authors used Google Form. Letters with the link on the questionnaire and the instruction for its completion were sent online to managers and HR specialists from Ukrainian companies.

A total of 300 letters were sent. 230 respondents filled out Google Forms. The answers of 26 respondents were not considered as the respondents did not answer all the questions. As a result, 204 questionnaires were processed and summarized.

Table 1 contains the information of survey collected data.

Table 1. The information of survey collected data

	Number	Percentage, %
Letters sent	300	100
Not filled questionnaires	70	23.3
Filled questionnaires	230	76.7
Uncompleted questionnaires	26	8.7
Usable questionnaires	204	68

Constructed by the authors

The demographic characteristics of respondents from the final sample are shown in Table 2.

*Table 2. The demographic characteristics of respondents
from the final sample*

Characteristic	Percentage, %
<i>The type of economic activity</i>	
Agriculture, forestry, and fishing	4.9
Manufacturing	10.8
Construction	1
Wholesale and retail trade	10.8
Transportation and warehousing, postal and courier activities	1
Information and communication	14.7
Financial and insurance activities	8.8
Real estate activities	2
Professional, scientific and technical activities	3.9
Administrative and support service activities	2
Public administration and defense; compulsory social security	2
Education	7.8
Human health and social work activities	3.9
Other service activities	26.5
<i>Organizational and legal form</i>	
Public enterprise	9.8
Joint-stock company	2.9
Limited liability partnership	2.9
Branch (another separate unit)	3.9
Private enterprise	68.6
Authority of municipality power	1.0

Characteristic	Percentage, %
State-run organization (establishment, institution)	4.9
Communal organization (establishment, institution)	2.9
Other forms	2.9
<i>The number of employees</i>	
up to 50	25.5
from 50 to 250	21.6
more than 250	52.9
<i>Position</i>	
HR specialists	29.4
HR manager	15.7
Head of HR department (personnel development department, etc.)	27.5
Other managerial positions	10.8
Other positions	16.7
<i>Age</i>	
under 25	20.6
25-40	56.9
41-55	20.6
over 55	2.0
<i>Work experience</i>	
under 3 years	18.6
from 3 to 10 years	44.1
from 10 to 20 years	22.5
over 20 years	14.7

Characteristic	Percentage, %
<i>Academic degree</i>	
bachelor	1.0
master	85.3
scientific degree (Ph.D., Ph.D. habil.)	13.7
<i>Gender</i>	
female	86.3
male	13.7

Constructed by the authors

The most of respondents work for organizations that belong to other service activities (26.5 %), information and communication (14.7 %), manufacturing (10.8 %), and wholesale and retail trade (10.8 %). Regarding the organizational and legal form, respondents work for private (68.6 %), public (9.8 %), and state-run (4.9 %) organizations. Most respondents work for organizations with 250 and more employees (52.9 %).

Regarding individual characteristics, most respondents are HR specialists (29.4 %) and the head of the HR department (personnel development department, etc.) (27.5 %). Most respondents are aged 25–40 (56.9 %) and have work experience from 3 to 10 years (44.1 %). 86.3 % are female respondents. 85.3 % of respondents have a master's degree.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

As we mentioned before, in the current situation, the role of health and safety management is growing. Health and safety management programs can include:

- creating safe work conditions;
- preventing professional burnout;
- reducing threats to life at work;
- reducing stress;

— reducing occupational disease caused by an unhealthy environment.

Personnel health and safety should play an essential role in HRM, aiming at retention and using human potential in the best way, providing staff well-being. In this context, important labor protection activities are technical safety, occupational health, labor protection culture, and psychology.

Table 3 contains the survey results on the implementation of health and safety programs in Ukrainian companies.

Table 3. The survey results on the implementation of ensuring the personnel health and safety practices in Ukrainian companies

Statements	Answers, % of respondents				
	strongly agree	rather agree	rather disagree	strongly disagree	difficult to answer
The organization creates environmentally-friendly working conditions	36.3	30.4	10.8	14.7	7.8
The organization creates resource-saving and environmentally sensitive workplaces	22.5	20.6	15.7	27.5	13.7
The organization implements measures to improve the employees' health and reduce stress and occupational disease caused by an unhealthy environment	33.3	25.5	8.8	21.6	10.8

Constructed by the authors

According to the survey results, two-thirds (66.7 %) of respondents confirmed that the *organizations create environmentally-friendly working conditions*. The rest (one-third) of organizations do not pay due attention to the personnel and the environment safety.

This practice does not correspond to the corporate social responsibility concept.

The best practice of creating environmentally-friendly working conditions is in information and communication organizations. 93.3 % of respondents answered that organizations they work for exercise such practices. Financial and insurance companies demonstrate good results: 77.8 % of respondents gave positive answers. 72.7 % of respondents from manufacturing enterprises and 66/7 % — from service organizations stated that their employers create environmentally-friendly working conditions. Less than half (45.5 %) of trade organizations introduce these practices (Fig. 1).

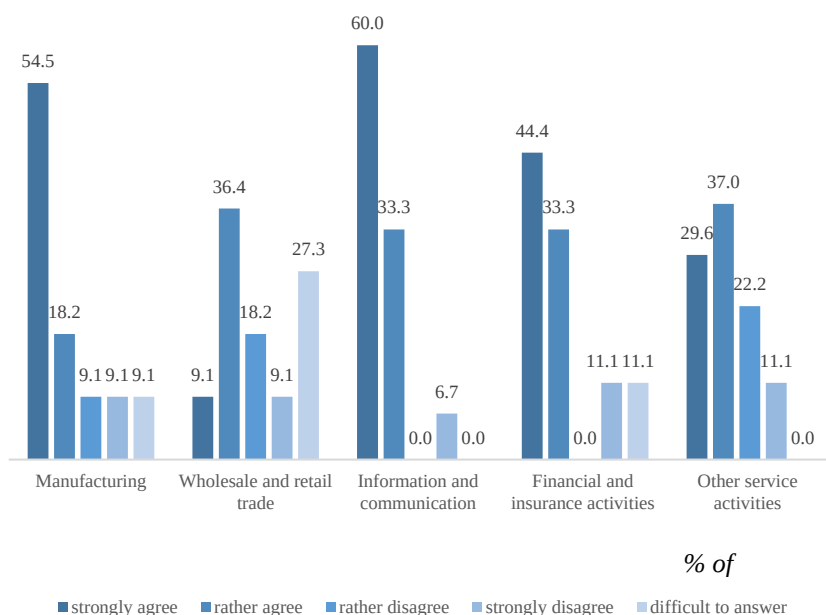


Figure 1. The survey results on creating environmentally-friendly working conditions by the organizations of the different sectors of the economy

Constructed by the authors

More than three-quarters (77.1 %) of private companies *create environmentally-friendly working conditions*. Only 40 % of representatives from the public companies gave positive answers concerning the availability of such practices.

As for organizations with a different number of employees, *environmentally-friendly working conditions* are created more often in small organizations. 73.1 % of respondents stated that organizations they work for have such practices. 68.5 % of respondents from large companies and 54.5 % — from middle ones confirmed the implementation of these practices.

Less than half (43.1 %) of respondents pointed out that the *organizations create resource-saving and environmentally sensitive workplaces*. We can conclude that most organizations are not ecologically responsible.

Financial and insurance organizations demonstrate the advanced practice in creating resource-saving and environmentally sensitive workplaces. 66.7 % of respondents confirmed that the organizations create such workplaces. This figure is 54.8 % higher than the average. The least the wholesale and retail trade organizations create resource-saving and environmentally sensitive workplaces. Only 18.2% of respondents gave positive answers about implementing such practices (Fig. 2).

Almost half (48.6 %) of the private companies create resource-saving and environmentally sensitive workplaces. Only 10% of representatives from the public companies gave positive answers concerning these practices.

There is no difference in creating resource-saving and environmentally sensitive workplaces among enterprises with different numbers of employees. The data of various enterprises are on the average level: 44.4 % of large companies, 42.3 % of small ones, and 40.9 % of middle ones confirmed the introduction of these practices.

According to the survey results, 58.8 % of respondents indicated that the *organizations implement measures to improve the employees' health and reduce stress and occupational disease caused by an unhealthy environment* (Table 3). Such practice positively influences the physical, mental, and psychological health of employees. We consider that organizations should pay more attention to creating environmentally sensitive workplaces, and preventing stress and

occupational disease, especially in the conditions of military and ecological threats and pandemia COVID-19.

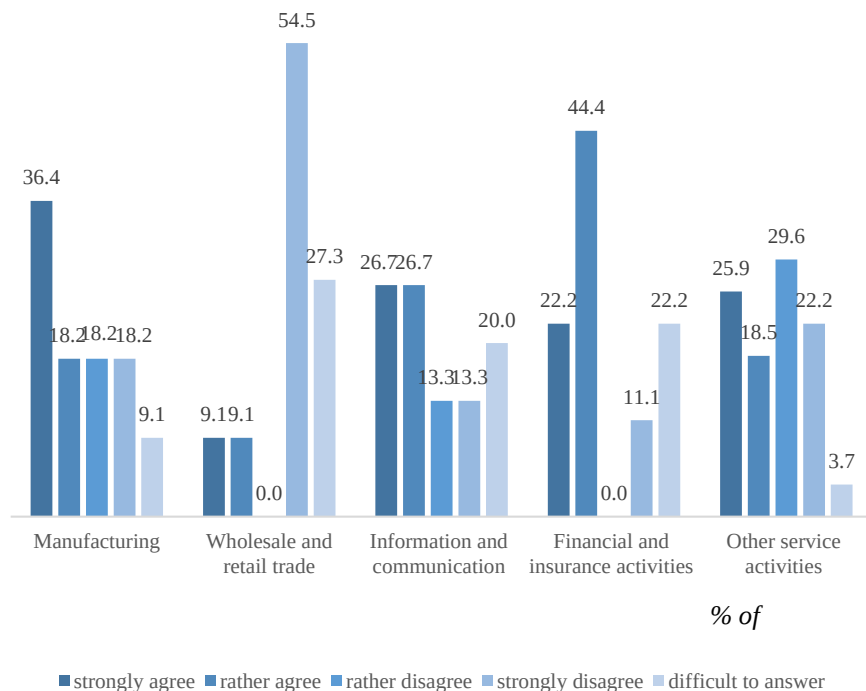


Figure 2. The survey results on creating resource-saving and environmentally sensitive workplaces by the organizations of the different sectors of the economy

Constructed by the authors

The research results correspond to survey outcomes “Employee well-being survey: Identifying the path to success” conducted by Deloitte Ukraine and Wellbeing Company. According to the survey outcomes, 53 % of organizations take measures to identify and reduce stress in the workplace (Deloitte Ukraine, 2021).

Manufacturing companies demonstrate the best practice in improving the employees' health and reducing stress and occupational disease caused by an unhealthy environment. 81.8 % of respondents confirmed that the companies implement appropriate measures. This figure is 39.1 % higher than the average. The wholesale and retail trade companies are not successful in this sphere. Only 27.3 % of respondents gave positive answers about improving the employees' health and reducing stress and occupational disease caused by an unhealthy environment (Fig. 3).

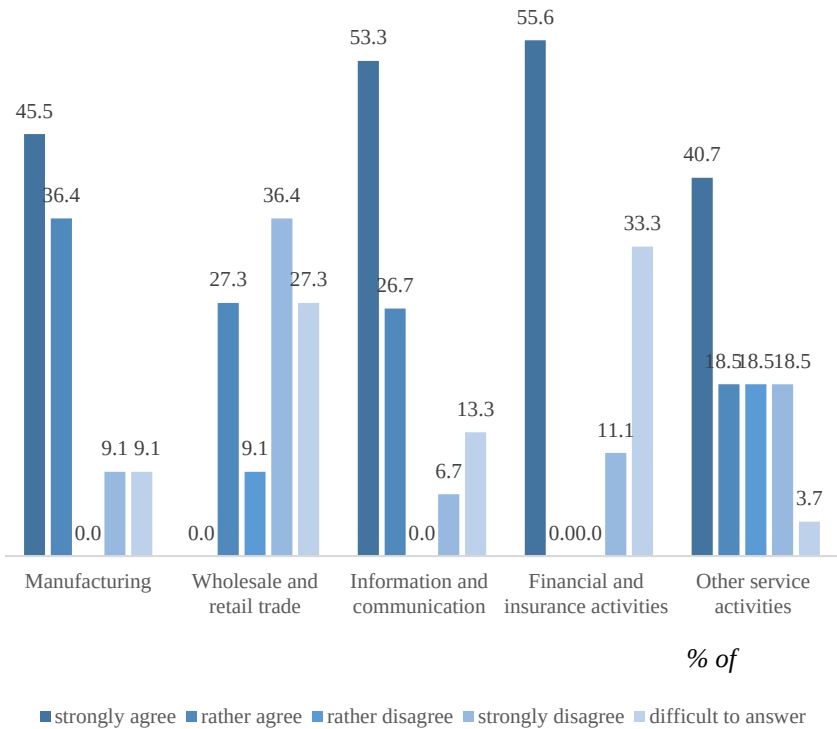


Figure 3. The survey results on improving the employees' health by the organizations of the different sectors of the economy

Constructed by the authors

64.3 % of the private and 40 % of public enterprises implement measures to improve the employees' health and reduce stress and occupational disease caused by an unhealthy environment.

Large enterprises have the most common practices of improving the employees' health and reducing stress and occupational disease caused by an unhealthy environment. 66.7 % of respondents confirmed that the enterprises implement appropriate measures. At the same time, 53.8 % of respondents from small companies and 45.5 % — from middle ones said that employers implement these practices.

5.CONCLUSION

The role of health and safety management is increasing in Ukraine in military and ecological threats, pandemia COVID-19. It requires a rethinking of the role of health and safety management programs, shifting the emphasis on saving lives in the face of constant and unforeseen military threats.

According to the survey results, *creating environmentally-friendly working conditions* is the most popular health and safety management practice in Ukrainian companies. *Two-thirds* (66.7 %) of respondents confirmed that the organizations *have such* practices. Measures to improve the employees' health and reduce stress and occupational disease caused by an unhealthy environment are less spread. 58.8 % of respondents indicated the introduction of these practices. The less common are practices of creating resource-saving and environmentally sensitive workplaces. Only 43.1 % of respondents pointed out that the organizations create such workplaces.

Based on the survey results, we can describe the profile of the most advanced organization in creating environmentally-friendly working conditions: a small private organization in the information and communication sector of the economy.

The description of the profile of the most cutting-edge organizations in improving the employees' health and reducing stress and occupational disease caused by an unhealthy environment is a large private enterprise from the manufacturing sector of the economy.

The most progressive organization profile in creating resource-saving and environmentally sensitive workplaces is the large private organization from the financial and insurance sector of the economy.

As we can see, different sectors of the economy have their own experience in health and safety management, which should be examined and disseminated to other companies.

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