

RESTRICTION FACTORS TO IMPLEMENT SAFETY PRACTICES IN SMALL GRADE CONTRACTORS

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ABSTRACT

This study was focused on small grade contractor in Malaysian construction industry. The total of small grade contractors in Malaysia registered by Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB) is higher and increases for every year. However, it is well known that construction project are exposed to accidents and injuries including of minor accidents, ergonomics problems, out dated machinery can cause the machine breakdown, and lack of awareness from employers and employees. The statistic of construction accidents is one of the critical sectors that need a huge and fast overhaul from the current site safety practices. Moreover, the safety practice in small grade contractors is too far to achieve the good safety performance in construction industry compare to large grade contractors. In this study, a semi-structured question was developed to identify the factors that affecting safety practice in small grade contractors. The data used in this study was collected through the interview with manager in small grade contractors, Site Safety Supervisor (SSS), and Safety and Health Officer (SHO). The finding of this paper was identified factors that influence safety practice in small grade contractors such as poor Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) management; small project value; financial constraint; lack of training and knowledge on safety management; high competition; lack of communication; unsatisfactory safety motivation; not exposed with good safety culture on site; the existing OSH framework is fragmented; difficult in contract acquirement; do not have SSS, SHO or safety person in charge; lack of OSH formal documentation; financial limitation and time constraints. The critical factors lack of safety practice which are financial limitation and lack of training and knowledge. In conclusion, small grade contractors faced for some factors that avoid them to implement safety practice in their companies.

Keywords: Safety Practices, Small Grade Contractors, Construction Industry

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1. Introduction

Construction sites are familiar with dangerous and risky sector compared to others sector. Occupational accidents are commonly in developing countries. However, occupational can be reduced through the effectiveness of prevention measure by training, good housekeeping, hazard assessment, better personal

protective equipment (PPE) and inspection (Unnikrishnan et al., 2015). An increased risk for injuries is found in small contractor and is especially evident for the construction industry (Holte et al., 2015; Dabrowski, 2015; Keller and Cunningham, 2016; Kheni et al., 2005; Cheng et al., 2010; Ozmec et al., 2015; Sunindijo, 2015). Some companies are typically engaged small contractor as subcontractors in

the construction industry. Subcontractors are located at the lower end of the inter-organizational hierarchy in a construction project. In addition, their ability to exert influence on decision making in the construction process is limited.

Previous research suggests that Australian small contractor companies may not manage OHS risk as effectively as larger firms in the industry. In Queensland's small contractor employers have a poor understanding of their responsibilities under OHS law (Holmes et al., 1999 and Legg et al., 2015). In another study of contractor company in Victoria, larger contractor employers were found to view OHS as something to be integrated into their management systems (Cheng et al., 2015 and Holmes et al., 1999), whereas small contractor employers did not focus on systems of management and believed OHS risks to be created by employees and therefore viewed risk control as the responsibility of employees (Holmes et al., 1999). It's supposed, every employer has a responsibility towards each employee to ensure that the employee safe from risk and injury during working. An employee's perception will reflect how they believe that safety is to be valued in the organization. Top management is often responsible for the implementation of safety enhancing system and the development of a safety-oriented culture. The impact of worker behavior on safety and concluded that training and reinforcement of safety practices help in preventing accidents on the work floor. Inspirational motivation which is communication is importance of safety and motivates employees to care about safety (Unnikrishnan et al., 2015).

Safety leadership motivates team members to work harder, to work efficiently, and to take ownership of responsibility for safety performance. The Federal Safety Commissioner emphasized the importance of safety leadership of senior manager in achieving a safety culture (Safety Commissioner, 2007). The Health and Safety Executive also has stated that without effective leadership, the good safety performance cannot be achieved (Lu and Yang, 2010). Developing and sustaining safety leadership is important to reduce accidents and to promote safety

among managers and general employees (Wan Faida & Mohd Saidin, 2018).

Relatively poor OHS management and outcomes in small grade contractors may be attributed to characteristics that are typical of small grade contractors. This makes it more difficult for them to create and maintain a safe and healthy work environment and to manage safety and may explain why employees in small grade contractors are generally more frequently exposed to hazardous situations and suffer more work-related injuries and illnesses than those working in large grade contractors (Holte et al., 2015).

In addition, the safety problems in small grade contractors are related to lack of adequate resources to address safety issues. For example, they have limited access to external sources of advice and support and to business information hence, are reliant on trusted relationship (Legg et al., 2015). Lack of knowledge of the contractor's safety risks (Kheni et al., 2005).

The safety activities are including safety policy and objective statement; training; inspections; risk assessments; safety responsibilities and employee involvement in safety issues (Kheni et al., 2005; Misnan & Mohameed, 2007). The contractors in small grade not apply all of safety activity in their company because of some factors or barriers to implement it on site. In order to develop a good safety culture, the attitudes of the workers need to be reoriented by adopting work practice best practices, changes in work culture and good housekeeping (Unnikrishnan et al., 2015).

Small grade contractors often employ family and/or friends, seasonal, casual or part-time non-unionized workers. They often suffer from skill shortage. Staff wages are often low. Jobs are less secure. Table 1 represented the management characteristics of contractor's grade.