

## CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES OF OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY AMONG FACTORY WORKERS IN NIGERIA.

**Lale Peniel Ochure, Dan Felicia Agbor-Obun, Edet Itam Ben,**  
*Dept. of Human Kinetics and Health Education,  
University of Calabar, Calabar and*

**Alebiosu Emmanuel Olorunleke**  
*Dept. of Health Promotion and Environmental Health Education,  
University of Ilorin, Ilorin.*

### **Abstract**

*The study focused on contemporary challenges of occupational health and safety among factory workers in Nigeria. This study aimed at determining challenges facing occupational health and safety among factory workers in Nigeria and to find out ways of improving occupational health and safety among factory workers in Nigeria. Occupational health and safety are defined as those purposes that evaluate and control risks that occur within the work environment. The researcher found out challenges facing occupational health and safety include: Inadequate skilled personnel, funding and logistics constraint, Inadequate occupational health and safety regulations and policies, influence of people in power and inadequate instances of sanctions and prosecutions. It concluded that occupational health and Safety are defined as those purposes that evaluate and control risks. It was recommended that all stakeholders have a role to play in ensuring that the health and well-being of workers are safeguarded at all times.*

**Keywords:** Occupational health and Safety, challenges facing occupational health and safety and ways of improving occupational health and safety.

### **Introduction**

Occupational health and safety have been a major challenge in our day to day lives because many individuals do not make use of health information that will properly guide them on precautionary measures towards avoiding health hazards. Factory workers in Nigeria have neglected the importance of safety at their various workplaces which is why there is continuous records of injuries and deaths as a result of not observing safety rules in jobs carried out in factories (International Labour Organization, 2019).

It has been estimated that the total rates of occupational hazards either mild or severe is accounted for about 270 million persons (Hamalainen, Takala and Saarela, 2016). Individuals who work in areas where occupational hazards are on the increase have decided to continue in their usual way of not making use of protective equipment's that is why they are regular damages to them (International Labour Organization, 2019). As it relates to the statistical figures recorded in Europe pertaining accidents that occur in workshops annually in 15 member states of the European union (EU) before the expansion of 2004 and 2007 estimated that 5000 workers were killed in the process of carrying out their respective duties

in which about 5 million workers were victims of the accidents which occurred at their various duty posts that exceeded three days because of their absence from work (EU, 2004). If there are records of property losses as a result of accidents that took place at construction sites then it is high time that the accident causes are completely eliminated (Government of Viet Nam, 2006).

The researcher observed that factory workers in Nigeria pay no attention to safety measures that govern the rules of workplace despite health sensitization programmes and workshops that is why there seem not to be improvements. The researcher also noticed that factory workers in Nigeria are in the habit of not eliminating the environment where they work of hazards that cause accidents and harm to them. This research aimed at determining contemporary challenges facing factory workers in Nigeria and to find out ways of improving occupational health and safety among factory workers in Nigeria. The questions that cut across the mind of researchers are: what are the challenges facing occupational health and safety among factory workers in Nigeria and what are the ways of improving occupational health and safety among factory workers in Nigeria.

Occupational health and safety are defined as those purposes that evaluate and control risks which occur within the work environment for the safety of workers (Alli, 2008). It is known as one of the key factors that are responsible for accomplishing stable and decent working environment and conditions in order to create an atmosphere where precautionary measures are taken so that the lives of factory workers are protected (Alli, 2008). Occupational health and safety are explained to be a way of providing protection for workers in the environment where it appears to be at great risks (Oak Ridge National Laboratory, 2015). Occupational health is a subject matter known for its multidisciplinary specialty in healthcare which its primary aim is to undertake their occupation in a manner that causes less harm to their health and well-being (WHO, 2016). Occupational health and safety are the most important aspects of labour relations in which its major goal is to protect the wellbeing of factory workers against unwanted hazards which is capable of causing harm and death (Kapetanidou, 2015).

Occupational health that lacks is definitely going to experience occupational accidents in the work place if proper means are not taken into consideration and it can cause the employee not to be able to carry out his or her duties (Stamati & Syriopoulis, 2013). Everyone that is involved in one occupational risk prone Job is entitled to safety at all times which is a top most priority in which their lives must be safe and for their lives to be properly safeguarded then a lot of commitment for that purpose has to be actualized (Gacie- Herrero, 2012). It is necessary that health and safety programs are designed in order to reduce stress on workers who work in factories and also adopt proper management strategies which will assist in increasing productivity (Anthony et al., 2007). Armstrong (2006) was of the opinion that health and safety equipment's are to be well inspected in order to completely avoid occupational hazards within the work environment which is for the best interest for their well-being.

## Methodology

The methodology approach employed quantitative research method. The quantitative method encompasses secondary data gathering through literature review and analysis of the collected data through statistical analysis. Sauders et al. (2012) opined that quantitative is a synonym being used for secondary or primary data gathering technique and/or analysis method involving numeric data. This particular research builds on existing researches which investigated the contemporary challenges of occupational health and safety among factory workers in Nigeria. The reliability of quantitative data collected was ensured by collecting them directly from the database and annual reports of the Nigeria Ministry of Health database. Overall, the research employed time series analysis to analyse the existing quantitative data.

## Results

Occupational health and safety worker in Nigeria have continued to struggle with one occupational hazard or the other especially in areas that have to do with where metals are welded including cement factories which all result in noise pollution. The following challenges facing occupational health and safety include:

1. Inadequate skilled personnel: - Inadequate skilled personnel's are biting issues that have continued to negatively influence the implementation of occupational health and safety standards at workshops in Nigeria which result to inadequate protective equipment's such as dark glasses, ear plugs and safety boots as well as hand gloves (Eyiah and Quartey, 2019). It was noted that the inspection of factories and Labor operating as civil servants are governed by civil and local government worker's welfare of services are grouped by a reasonable insufficient remuneration and retirement rewards which makes productivity to lose its value (Eyiah and Quartey, 2019).
2. Funding and logistics constraint: - Funding and logistics have continued to be one of the problems that Nigeria is faced with as a result of low manpower due to the poor attitudes of the government which its responsibilities are to make sure that quality standard equipment's are made available and are to be accounted for in case of any damage (Kheni, 2008). Also, it is important to note that occupational health and safety centers in Nigeria lack requisite equipment's and technocrats who are to undergo surveys and inspection which also involve the existing equipment that were out of date and not sufficient enough to make them perform various assessment that is in a way related to Occupational health and safety (Eyiah and Quartey, 2019).
4. Inadequate occupational health and safety regulations and policies: - When there is absence of laid down rules that govern the work environment, there is every tendency for there to be uncountable occupational hazards among those who work in occupational health and safety institutions (Amponsah-Tawiah and Dartey - Baah, 2012; Eyiah and Quartey, 2019). Generally, occupational health and safety workers and supervisors are made to apply rules and regulations that govern the

standards that other nations had previously done in order to forestall sanity in occupational health and safety institutions (Loosemore, et al, 2019).

5. Influence of people in power: - This is a process where there is a change in leadership which signifies no continuity in government, the issue of occupational health and safety is to be given attention which is by drawing up health education intervention programmes which is to be carried out by occupational health educators to improve the health and wellbeing of factory workers in Nigeria which will encourage them to put in their best (Idubor & Osiameje, 2013). But today it is on the opposite side because everything in Nigeria today is being tied down to politics which has not helped matters in any way that is why people no longer have the zeal to carry out their duties which has further crumbled the system in Nigeria (Okojie, 2010). Accordingly, even when an occupational health and safety supervisors are ready to perform their duties to the best of their abilities, they received instructions from above to stop any sanction imposed on offenders in the organizations which is the more reason why there is no change and proper orientation of workers in occupational health and safety centers (Idubor & Osiameje, 2013).
6. Inadequate instances of sanctions and prosecutions: - This is where professionalism is lacking in the area of safeguarding the health and wellbeing of factory workers that is why there seem not to be improvements.

Although, occupational health and safety offences that are under the Act of 328 and Act 651 are criminal professionally which they are being handled otherwise (Purse, Dawson and Dorrian, 2010). On the other hand, it's also a situation where negligence is on the increase as it regards to the health and safety of factory workers that is why there is no record of significant improvement and this has led to so many accidents that could be avoided and unfortunately resulted to varying degrees of disabilities (Baldwin and Anderson, 2002).

### **Ways of improving occupational health and safety**

The following can be looked into to improve occupational health and safety :

1. Creating a plan for improving health and safety in work places
2. Constant routine inspection/monitoring and evaluation against workplace regular hazards.
3. Training of employees on work place safety
4. Reduce stress at workplaces and ensure effective communication.
5. Proper accident investigation report with prompt action.
6. Good maintenance of records
7. Improving health and safety provisions in work place.

### **Conclusion**

Occupational health and safety are what everyone is striving at in order to live in a good and conducive working environment without any form of obstruction. Occupational health and safety are defined as those purposes that evaluate and control risks which occur within the

work environment for the safety of workers, Based on the conclusion, the following recommendations were made:

1. Investors and government own companies should try as much as possible to provide adequate funding to improve the quality of equipment in factories.
2. Governmental and non-governmental organizations should employ competent health and safety personnel in order to improve work performance.
3. All stakeholders in work places should ensure that the health and well-being and safety of workers are safeguarded at all times.

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