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Safety climate and the influence of leadership:

A study of safety climate and the influence leadership training has on employee perceptions of health and safety.

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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Abstract

The aim of this study is to understand the influence leadership has upon safety in the workplace as seen through the eyes of its employees. This research was undertaken in the Island City of Singapore and associated with a business owned by a Multi-National Corporation, (MNC), operating locally. The research was carried out as a reflection of the organisations safety climate, through a professionally available questionnaire mechanism.

While research and theory contend that safety culture is enduring and possibly more difficult to assess, it is recognised that safety climate is measureable and is considered to be a reflection of safety culture. Theory also contends safety climate as being a snap shot of the organisations 'mood' at a single point in time and therefore has a short shelf life. It is also recognised that the background to this study is done acknowledging the continued debate surrounding the understanding and definitions associated with the concepts organisational culture & climate, safety culture & climate.

Leadership theory and research points out the importance of leadership on employee behaviour and motivation. The organisations' senior leadership underwent intervention training provided by the author based upon leadership theory of a transformational style and workplace best practice. A Safety Climate questionnaire was provided to the participating employees of the MNC business and was repeated following a three-month interval. The study was quantitative, longitudinal and comparative in nature. The participating employees forming a control group and an intervention group. Following the leadership training the Senior Leadership was associated only with the employee intervention group. Safety climate analysis was undertaken with the findings being a result of questionnaire responses. Prior to the research it was expected that the results of the research would provide useful future guidance for organisations and their leadership. The author believed that the study would help organisational leadership better understand and make full use of the influence they have. This knowledge would in turn provide leadership the requisite emphasis to improve workplace safety and employee's perception through the influence leadership holds.

The study's hypothesis was that a discernible difference should be noted between the ensuing assessments due to improved leadership and the understanding of the influence it holds. The improved leadership influence will be reflected in employee's perception of management and workplace safety as captured in the safety climate questionnaire.

It was believed that this research should help provide the organisation greater understanding of both an organisations safety climate, and leadership culture. Through this research the organisation should also recognise the role leadership influence plays

and that the utilisation of safety climate assessment can be a useful and predictive tool. That its use can play a part in the organisations endeavour to reduce workplace injuries and help reduce the associated escalating financial cost to both employees and the organisation of such injuries and loss.

The outcome from the study found a positive correlation to the research question and hypothesis with the safety climate results indicating a positive improvement for the intervention group associated with the leadership influence, as a direct consequence of the intervention training. The safety climate measurement improved significantly for the surveyed dimension of Management Commitment and the other management specific areas. The Safety Climate Index improvement for the dimension of Management Commitment alone increased by 41.03% and an overall increase of 16.95% across all of the nine survey dimensions.

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Table of Contents

Abstract……2
Preface and Acknowledgements……4
List of Illustrations……8
List of Graphs……8
List of Tables……9
List of Appendices……10
List of Abbreviations……11
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION……12
1.1 Background to the Research Objectives……12
1.1.1 The Issue: The Organisational Burden of Workplace Injuries And Disease……12
1.1.2 Economic Cost of Workplace Injuries and Disease……13
1.1.3 Continuing Injuries and Disease……13
1.1.4 The Gap……14
1.1.5 Leadership……14
1.1.6 Safety Climate……15
1.2 Research Gap……17
1.3 Research Question & Hypothesis……18
1.4 Research Design……18
1.5 Thesis Structure……18
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW……19
2.1 Introduction……19
2.2 Organisational Culture……19
2.2.1 Defining Organisational Culture……20
2.2.2 Historical Background of Organisational Culture……21
2.2.3 Organisational Culture Contention……23
2.2.4 Workplace Safety and Organisational Culture……24
2.2.5 Safety Performance and Organisational Culture……25
2.3 Safety Climate……27
2.3.1 Safety Climate Measured……28
2.3.2 Safety Climate Assessment……30
2.4 Leadership……32
2.4.1 Introduction……32
2.4.2 Leadership History – From Great Man to Transformational Leadership……32
2.4.3 Transactional Leadership……33
2.4.4 Transformational Leadership……34
2.4.5 Authentic Leadership ……35
2.4.6 Leadership and the Organisation……37

2.4.7 Leadership and Safety.....37
2.4.8 Leadership and Trust.....40
2.5 Summary.....40
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHOD.....42
3.1 Research Design Overview.....42
3.2 Questionnaire Structure.....43
3.3 Participants.....44
3.4 Materials.....46
3.4.1 Leadership Intervention Training.....46
3.5 Procedure.....47
3.6 Questionnaire.....48
3.7 Statistical Analysis.....52
3.7.1 Mann-Whitney Test.....52
3.7.2 Statistical Significance – Paired t Test.....53
3.8 Survey Context - Singapore.....53
3.8.1 Singapore Cultural Dimension Summary.....53
3.9 Ethics and Research Limitations.....54
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS.....56
4.1 Introduction.....56
4.2 Survey Overview and Preparation.....56
4.3 First Survey Overview.....58
4.3.1 First Survey Results.....59
4.3.2 First Survey Results Comparison.....61
4.4 Second Survey Overview.....62
4.4.1 Second Survey Results Comparison.....63
4.5 Percent Change between the Two Surveys.....64
4.6 Difference between the Intervention and Control Groups.....65
4.7 Results for the Key Drivers.....66
4.8 Directly Associated Management Questions.....68
4.8.1 Dimension of Management Commitment.....68
4.8.1.1 Statistical Significance – Paired t - Test.....69
4.8.2 Dimension of Communication.....71
4.8.3 Dimension of Safety as a Priority.....73
4.8.4 Dimension of Involvement.....75
4.9 Other Dimensions without Specific Management Questions.....77
4.9.1 Dimension of Safety Rules and Procedures.....77
4.9.2 Dimension of Personal Priority & the Need for Safety.....79
4.9.3 Dimension of Work Environment.....81
4.9.4 Dimension of Supportive Environment.....83
4.9.5 Dimension of Personnel Appreciation of Risk.....85

4.10 Intervention Group Results by other Factors.....86
4.10.1 Age.....86
4.10.1.1 Age Results.....87
4.10.2 Gender.....88
4.10.2.1 Gender Results.....89
4.10.3 Ethnicity.....90
4.10.3.1 Ethnicity Results.....91
4.10.4 Time in Business.....92
4.10.4.1 Time in Business Results.....94
4.11 Intervention Group Question Ranking for Dimension of Management Commitment.....96
4.12 Leadership Safety Index Review.....97
4.13 Audit of Leadership Agreed Actions for the Intervention Group.....98
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION.....99
5.1 Process and Preparation Overview.....100
5.2 Management Action Outcome.....100
5.3 Expectations.....100
5.4 Results Overview – Management Commitment Dimension.....101
5.5 Other Directly Related Management Dimensions.....103
5.6 Results Summary from other Factors.....104
5.7 Unexpected Results.....105
5.7.1 Managers Walk Past Unsafe Behaviours and Will Not Stop & Address Them.....105
5.7.2 Personal Appreciation of Risk.....106
5.8 Opportunities.....107
5.8.1 Production/Safety Trade-Off.....107
5.8.2 Leadership Intervention Training.....107
5.9 Culture.....109
5.10 Further Research.....110
5.11 Limitations.....111
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION.....112
References.....115
Appendices.....129

List of Illustrations

Figure 1. Questionnaire Response Scoring as a Likert Scale……48
Figure 2. Further Mapping of the Possible Responses……49
Figure 3. Mapping the Responses Associated with asking the Question in a Negative Fashion……49
Figure 4. Seven Level Colour Coded Safety Climate Performance……50
Figure 5. Resulting Survey Data will be displayed in a Spider Diagram……51
Figure 6. Spider Diagram showing Organisation SCI score, (Orange line), Compared to High Performing Benchmark, (Green line)……52

List of Graphs

Graph 1. Spider Diagram of the Intervention Group First Survey SCI results Showing the nine Dimensions……59
Graph 2. Spider Diagram of the Control Group First Survey SCI results Showing the Nine Dimensions……60
Graph 3. Showing the Numbers of Participants from the Intervention Group by Age……86
Graph 4. Showing the Number of Participants from the Intervention Group by Gender……88
Graph 5. Showing the Number of Participants from the Intervention Group by Ethnicity……90
Graph 6. Showing the Number of Participants from the Intervention Group by Time in Business……92
Graph 7. Showing the SCI Results for the Factor 'Time in Business' For the Intervention Group……93
Graph 8. Spider Diagram for Managers LSI Results……97

List of Tables

Table 1. First Survey SCI for the Nine Dimensions of the Intervention And Control Group……61

Table 2. Second Survey SCI for the Nine Dimensions of the Intervention and Control Group……63

Table 3. Percentage Change between the First and Second Surveys for both Intervention and Control Groups……64

Table 4. Percentage Difference in SCI Scores between the Intervention and Control Groups……65

Table 5. High Level Key Drivers SCI across both Surveys for the Intervention and Control Group……66

Table 6. The Results for the Dimension of **Management Commitment** And Relationship to the Key Drivers and Associated Questions……68

Table 7. Paired t - Test for the Dimension of **Management Commitment**……70

Table 8. The Results for the Dimension of **Communication** and Relationship to the Key Drivers and Associated Questions……71

Table 9. The Results for the Dimension of **Safety as a Priority** and Relationship to Key Drivers and Associated Questions……73

Table 10. The Results for the Dimension of **Involvement** and Relationship to the Key Drivers and Associated Questions……75

Table 11. The Results for the Dimension of **Safety Rules & Procedures** And Relationship to the Key Drivers and Associated Questions……77

Table 12. The Results for the Dimension of **Personal Priority & the Need for Safety** and Relationship to the Key Drivers and Associated Questions……79

Table 13. The Results for the Dimension of **Work Environment** and Relationship to the Key Drivers and Associated Questions……81

Table 14. The Results for the Dimension of **Supportive Environment** and Relationship to the Key Drivers and Associated Questions……83

Table 15. The Results for the Dimension of **Personal Appreciation of Risk** And the Relationship to the Key Drivers and Associated Questions……85

Table 16. Comparison Results by *Age* for the Intervention Group Across both Survey One and Two……87

Table 17. Comparison Results by *Gender* for the Intervention Group Across both Survey One and Two……89

Table 18. Comparison Results by *Ethnicity* across both Survey One and Two for the Intervention Group……91

Table 19. Comparison Results by *Time in Business* across both Survey One and Two for the Intervention Group……94

Table 20. Intervention Group Question Ranking across both Surveys For the Dimension of **Management Commitment**……96
Table 21. LSI Results for the Executive Management Team……..97
Table 22. Showing List of Agreed Management Actions Compared to Action Outcome……98

List of Appendices

Appendix A: Global Safety Index Company Profile……128
Appendix B: English version of the Safety Climate Survey Questions, including correlation to two of the original researchers' publications……..130
Appendix C: SCI Survey Questions translated into Malay……132
Appendix D: SCI Survey Questions translated into Simplified Mandarin……..134
Appendix E: Safety Leadership Index Survey Questions……..136
Appendix F: Safety Climate Index Maturity Level Descriptors……137
Appendix G: Safety Climate Index 14 Key Drivers……139
Appendix H: List of the Leadership agreed Intervention Activities……140
Appendix I: Management Workshop Walk Feedback Form……141
Appendix J: Questions Linked to the Nine Dimensions, Cox & Cheyne, 2000……142
Appendix K: Detailed Timeline of Research Project Events……144
Appendix L: Leadership Intervention Training Package……145

List of Abbreviations

EH&S	Environmental, Health & Safety
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GSI	Global Safety Index
HR	Human Resource
HSE	Health & Safety Executive
ILO	International Labor Organisation
ITC	International Trade Compliance
LSI	Leadership Safety Index
MNC	Multi-National Corporation
OHS	Occupational Health & Safety
OHSA	Occupational Safety and Health Administration
PBS	People Based Safety
SCI	Safety Climate Index
WSHi	Workplace Safety & Health Institute