

A Case Study of Coalface Workers' Attitude towards Occupational Health and Safety Key Performance Indicators

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Abstract : Maintaining good occupational health and safety (OHS) performance is significant at the coalface, especially in industries such as mining, power, and construction. Coalface workers are vulnerable to high OHS risks such as working at heights, working with mobile plants and vehicles, working with underground and above ground services, chemical emissions, radiation hazards and explosions at everyday work. To improve OHS performance of workers, OHS key performance indicators (KPIs) (for example, lost time injuries (LTI), serious injury frequency rate (SIFR), total reportable injury frequency rate (TRIFR) and number of near misses) are widely used by managers in making OHS business decisions such as investing in safety equipment and training programs. However, in many organizations, workers at the coalface hardly see any relevance or value addition of OHS KPIs to their everyday work. Therefore, the aim of the study was to understand why coalface workers perceive that OHS KPIs are not practically relevant to their jobs. Accordingly, this study was conducted as a qualitative case study focusing on a large electricity and gas firm in Australia. Semi-structured face to face interviews were conducted with selected coalface workers to gather data on their attitude towards OHS KPIs. The findings of the study revealed that workers at the coalface generally have no understanding of the purpose of KPIs, the meaning of each KPI, origin of KPIs, and how KPIs are correlated to organizational performance. Indeed, KPIs are perceived as 'meaningless obstacles' imposed on workers by managers without a rationale. It is recommended to engage coalface workers (a fair number of representatives) in both KPIs setting and revising processes while maintaining a continuous dialogue between workers and managers in regards OHS KPIs.

Keywords : KPIs, coalface, OHS risks, case-study

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