

## **A Critical Evaluation of Occupational Safety and Health Management Systems' Implementation: Case of Mutare Urban Timber Processing Factories, Zimbabwe**

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**Abstract :** The study evaluated the status of Occupational Safety and Health Management Systems' (OSHMSs) implementation by Mutare urban timber processing factories. A descriptive cross sectional survey method was utilized in the study. Questionnaires, interviews and direct observations were the techniques employed to extract primary data from the respondents. Secondary data was acquired from OSH encyclopedia, OSH journals, newspaper articles, internet, past research papers, African Newsletter on OSH and NSSA On-guard magazines among others. Analysis of data collected was conducted using statistical and descriptive methods. Results revealed an unpleasant low uptake rate (16%) of OSH Management Systems by Mutare urban timber processing factories. On a comparative basis, low implementation levels were more pronounced in small timber processing factories than in large factories. The low uptake rate of OSH Management Systems revealed by the study validates the Government of Zimbabwe and its social partners' observation that the dismal Zimbabwe OSH performance was largely due to non implementation of safety systems at most workplaces. The results exhibited a relationship between availability of a SHE practitioner in Mutare urban timber processing factories and OSHMS implementation. All respondents and interviewees' agreed that OSH Management Systems are handy in curbing occupational injuries and diseases. It emerged from the study that the top barriers to implementation of safety systems are lack of adequate financial resources, lack of top management commitment and lack of OSHMS implementation expertise. Key motivators for OSHMSs establishment were cited as provision of adequate resources (76%), strong employee involvement (64%) and strong senior management commitment and involvement (60%). Study results demonstrated that both OSHMSs implementation barriers and motivators affect all Mutare urban timber processing factories irrespective of size. The study recommends enactment of a law by Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare in consultation with NSSA to make availability of an OSHMS and qualified SHE practitioner mandatory at every workplace. More so, the enacted law should prescribe minimum educational qualification required for one to practice as a SHE practitioner. Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare and NSSA should also devise incentives such as reduced WCIF premiums for good OSH performance to cushion Mutare urban timber processing factories from OSHMS implementation costs. The study recommends the incorporation of an OSH module in the academic curriculums of all programmes offered at tertiary institutions so as to ensure that graduates who later end up assuming influential management positions in Mutare urban timber processing factories are abreast with the necessity of OSHMSs in preventing occupational injuries and diseases. In the quest to further boost management's awareness on the importance of OSHMSs, NSSA and SAZ are urged by the study to conduct OSHMSs awareness breakfast meetings targeting executive management on a periodic basis. The Government of Zimbabwe through the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare should also engage ILO Country Office for Zimbabwe to solicit for ILO's technical assistance so as to enhance the effectiveness of NSSA's and SAZ's OSHMSs promotional programmes.

**Keywords :** occupational safety health management system, national social security authority, standard association of Zimbabwe, Mutare urban timber processing factories, ministry of public service, labour and social welfare

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