

Inconsistent Safety Leadership as a Predictor of Employee Safety Behavior

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Abstract : Research on the effects of inconsistent safety leadership is limited, particularly regarding employee safety behavior in organizations. Inconsistent safety leadership occurs when organizational leaders display both effective and ineffective styles of safety leadership (i.e., transformational vs laissez-faire). In this study, we examine the effect of inconsistent safety leadership style on employee safety participation. Defined as the interaction of S.A.F.E.R (Speak, Act, Focus, Engage and Recognize) leadership style and passive leadership style, inconsistent safety leadership was found to be a significant predictor of safety participation in a sample of 307 nurses in Eastern Canada. Results of the moderated regression analysis also showed a significant main effect for S.A.F.E.R leadership, but not for passive leadership. To further explore the significant interaction, the simple slopes for S.A.F.E.R leadership at high and low levels (1 SD above and below the mean) of passive leadership were plotted. As predicted, the positive effects of S.A.F.E.R leadership behavior were attenuated when leaders were perceived by employees as also displaying high levels of passive leadership (i.e., inconsistent leadership styles). The research makes important theoretical and practical contributions to the occupational health and safety literature. The results demonstrate that leadership behavior, which is characteristic of the S.A.F.E.R model, is positively associated with employee safety participation. This finding is particularly important as researchers continue to explore what leaders can do to engage employees in work-related safety activities. The results also demonstrate how passive leadership may undermine the positive outcomes associated with safety leadership behavior in organizations. The data suggest that employee safety behavior is highest when leaders engage in safety effective leadership behavior on a consistent basis, rather than periodically.

Keywords : employee safety behavior, leadership, participation, safety training

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