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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARAFMS/v11-i3/10811> DOI:10.6007/IJARAFMS /v11-i3/10811

Received: 04 June 2021, **Revised:** 10 July 2021, **Accepted:** 27 July 2021

Published Online: 17 August 2021

In-Text Citation: (Mohd et al., 2021)

To Cite this Article: Mohd, R. H., Selamat, M. N., Aziz, S. F. A., & Omar, N. H. (2021). Ethnomethodological Research on Proactive Safety Behavior of The Young Workers. *International Journal of Academic Research in Accounting Finance and Management Sciences*, 11(3), 129–144.

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Vol. 11, No. 3, 2021, Pg. 129 - 144

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Ethnomethodological Research on Proactive Safety Behavior of The Young Workers

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Abstract

This research project aims to contribute to the existing research on proactive safety behaviour. Specifically, it investigates how the concept of proactive safety behaviour can be applied in order to understand and improve safety outcomes for younger workers in a Malaysian context. The increase number of accidents and injuries involving this age cohort of workers motivates the focus on younger workers. This research is innovative as it integrates a human resources framework of ability, motivation and opportunity with theoretical perspectives on proactive behaviour. It is hypothesized that proactive ability proactive motivation and proactive opportunity will predict proactive safety behavior amongst young workers. This study also aims to identify a range of positive outcomes for workers engaging in proactive safety behaviour. This research is an ethno-methodological study intended to gain an understanding of Malaysian young worker perceptions of proactive safety behaviour.

Keywords: Proactive Safety Behavior, Young Workers, Workplace Safety

Introduction

The global workforce is increasing as a consequence of the rapid development of emerging economies (ILO, 2014). 80% of the global workforce now resides in developing countries (Kortum, Leka, & Cox, 2011). The majority of these workers are young people, with about 90 percent of them residing in developing countries in Asia (Aziz & Osman, 2019; Tucker & Folkard, 2012). With per annum estimates of worldwide workplace accidents reaching over 264 million with over 350,000 fatalities (Hämäläinen, Takala, & Saarela, 2006; ILO, 2014), there is a huge concern over the safety and health of young workers. It has been reported that about 62.5 million young workers are engaged in hazardous work, compared with 51 million in 2004 (Dorman, 2012; Selamat et al., 2020; Selamat & Mukapit, 2018). Studies have shown that young workers are more likely to experience work related accidents than the older workers (Miller, Handelman, & Lewis, 2007; Tucker, Diekrager, Turner, & Kelloway, 2014). A range of factors contributing to this apparent increased risk for younger workers have been suggested, including a propensity for risk taking by younger workers (Aziz et al., 2021; Westaby & Lowe, 2005), levels of physical and psychological development (Sudhinaraset & Blum, 2010) and also the work environment (Lewko et al., 2010).

In this project, we explore the potential role played by proactive safety behaviour in improving safety outcomes for younger workers. Few studies have so far explored the role of proactivity in a safety context, and none has examined how the concept of proactive safety behaviour may be applied to improve safety outcomes for younger workers.

Literature Review

Proactive safety behaviour is gradually emerging as a new area of research. Proactive safety behaviour refers to employees being proactive in taking responsibility for improving safety outcomes for themselves and others. This is to be distinguished from the traditional view of employee safety behaviour, which is seen as compliance with safety routines. The notion that employees should act proactively, rather than being compelled or directed to act, in pursuit of safety goals is an appealing one. To date, however, there are only four published articles and one unpublished PHD thesis that have focused explicitly on proactive safety behaviour in organizations.

The work of Fugas and colleagues (Fugas, Melia, & Silva, 2011; Fugas, Silva, & Melia, 2012, 2013; Fugas & Silva, 2014) has examined PSB through the theoretical lens of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 2005). Fugas, Melia & Silva (2011) explored the normative antecedents of proactive safety behaviour. Injunctive and descriptive safety norms deriving from supervisors and co-workers were identified as potential social influences on PSB. Descriptive norms refer to perceptions of how supervisors and co-workers participate in and comply with safety practices, whilst injunctive norms denote the perceived approval of proactive and compliance safety practices. This study indicates that proactive safety behaviour of employees is empowered by peer approval for proactive safety behaviour. However, the perception of supervisors' safety did not affect individual safety behaviours. Employees are frequently influenced by individuals who belong in the same status and with whom they have more frequent interactions. Overall, supervisors' and co-workers' descriptive and injunctive norms were found to possess no relationship with safety behaviour compliance.

Fugas, Silva & Meliá (2012) attempted to identify the socio cognitive factors and the role of supervisors and co-workers in proactive safety behaviour. Their findings indicate that proactive safety behaviour is influenced by workers' safety attitudes and co-workers' safety behaviour. In determining workers' safety compliance, the results showed the mediating role of supervisors' safety behaviour. Overall, safety compliance was found to be strongly regulated by the combination of worker's safety attitudes, co-worker's safety behaviour and organization's formal safety procedures. Fugas, Silva & Meliá (2013) again used the theory of planned behaviour in their attempt to understand the co-existence of proactive safety behaviour and compliance safety behaviour. Proactive safety behaviour was defined as an internalized workers attitude, while compliance safety behaviour was construed in terms of regulated procedures of the safety system. The results indicated that internalized workers attitude is necessary but insufficient to explain proactive safety behaviour. Fugas, Silva & Meliá (2014) identify two possible motivating factors toward proactive safety behaviour: (1) The employees' attitudes and understanding of proactive safety behaviour; and (2) their perceived safety norms of other units in the organization (co-workers and superiors). Their findings indicated that supervisor's and co-workers' norms are potential motivators of proactivity safety domain. A recent doctoral thesis by Geddes (Geddes, 2012) utilises the (Zohar & Luria, 2005) model of safety climate and Hoffman and Morgeson's {Formatting

Citation} model of co-workers' and supervisors' effect on safety behaviour. The focal point of this thesis was to scrutinize the relationship of social exchange and safety climate to safety behaviour outcomes. The author concluded that a supportive working environment, reinforcing safety compliance and organizational encouragement, are determining factors in proactive safety behaviour.

Methodology

Research Design

We report the results of a qualitative study of proactive safety behavior amongst young Malaysian workers. Young workers (aged between 18-34) dominate the labor market participation in Malaysia Koen et al (2017) Koen et al (2017), and are at heightened risk of workplace accidents (Awang, Mansor, & Rodrigo, 2015). This study was designed to identify other factors that might affect proactive behavior amongst young Malaysian workers in a safety context. This research also aims at identifying the young workers understanding of and engagement in proactive safety behavior and also its key determining factors.

To conduct this exploratory study, we adopted an ethnomethodological approach. Ethnomethodology has been described as a descriptive science of sense-making (Heap, 1976), one that enables both the researcher and the subjects to explain and create meanings of practical actions and the circumstances of those actions (Attewell, 1974). The fundamental principles of an ethnomethodological approach involve investigating and gathering *in situ* information and consequential actions based on ordinary members' mutual understanding and concerted efforts (Garfinkel, 1996; Garfinkel & Livingston, 2003) The strength of an ethnomethodological approach lies in the indexicality (meaning) and reflexivity (context) (Maynard & Clayman, 1991; Rawls, 2008) two symbiotic facets of a continuous cycle in ethnomethodology that provide a detailed description about an event (McNall & Johnson, 1975). Ethnomethodology has its stance in qualitative research, focusing on the interpretable social orders in a person's daily life (Dix et al., 2004) that eventually lead to the production of sensible knowledge that can be understood by everybody (Scheele, 1975).

Participants and Procedure

The sample consisted of 33 young Malaysian workers from a variety of industries, aged between 21 and 28 years old, and with an average working experience of 2.84 years. The inclusion criteria for the participants were that they had to be 18 to 28 years old and currently employed. Interviewees were recruited through a letter that was sent out to approximately forty Human Resources (HR) departments of Small Medium Enterprises (SME) in the Klang Valley, Kuala Lumpur, using a list of addresses that were provided by the SME Corporation Malaysia. The HR managers in those companies were then asked to forward the invitation to young employees. All of the managers agreed to do so. Furthermore, I have approached other government sectors to extend the invitation. This is to strengthen the research into understanding the proactive safety behavior among the young employees from both private and public sector. The invitation indicated that participation in the research was voluntary and that participation could be made by contacting me through mobile phone or email. A total of 15 male informants and 18 female respondents contacted me and agreed to be interviewed. Details of the respondents are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1

The demographic information for respondents

Informant	Job tenure (years)	Age	Gender	Formal Education	Occupation	Industry	Sector
Respondent 1	3	25	Male	Diploma	Retail	Retail	Private
Respondent 2	3	23	Male	School leaver	Musician	Entertainment	Private
Respondent 3	2	25	Male	Bachelor Degree	Salesperson	Hotel/Tourism	Private
Respondent 4	2	26	Male	Bachelor Degree	Trainer	Government Agency	Public
Respondent 5	2	26	Male	Master's Degree	Lecturer	Education	Public
Respondent 6	5	28	Female	Bachelor Degree	Teacher	Education	Public
Respondent 7	4	27	Female	School Leaver	Supervisor	Business	Private
Respondent 8	3	24	Female	School leaver	Skincare saleswoman	Retail/Business	Private
Respondent 9	1	22	Female	School Leaver	Kindergarten teacher	Education	Private
Respondent 10	4	28	Female	Bachelor degree	Accountant	Business	Private
Respondent 11	4	28	Female	Master's Degree	Lecturer	Education	Public
Respondent 12	4	28	Male	Master's Degree	Lecturer	Education	Public
Respondent 13	3	26	Male	School Leaver	Sound technician	Entertainment	Private
Respondent 14	3	24	Male	School leaver	Craftsman	Construction	Private
Respondent 15	3	25	Female	Diploma	Nurse	Medical/Healthcare	Semi-government
Respondent 16	1	24	Male	Bachelor Degree	Engineer	Manufacturing	Private
Respondent 17	1	24	Male	Bachelor Degree	Engineer	Mining/petroleum	Private
Respondent 18	3	26	Female	School leaver	Law Enforcer	Transportation	Agency
Respondent 19	3	28	Female	Bachelor Degree	Architect	Construction	Private
Respondent 20	2	26	Female	Diploma	Designer	Manufacturing	Private
Respondent 21	3	24	Female	Diploma	Factory operator	Manufacturing	Private

Respondent 22	3	25	Female	Diploma	Customs officer	Transportation	Government
Respondent 23	3	28	Female	Bachelor Degree	Medical officer	Healthcare	Government
Respondent 24	4	28	Male	Aviation cert	Pilot	Transportation	Private
Respondent 25	2	25	Male	Bachelor Degree	Law enforcer	Consumerism	Government
Respondent 26	3	28	Female	Bachelor Degree	Medical officer	Healthcare	Government
Respondent 27	3	28	Female	Bachelor Degree	Engineer	Manufacturing	Private
Respondent 28	5	28	Female	Bachelor Degree	Criminal reporter	News reporting	Private
Respondent 29	2	24	Male	Certificate holder	Law enforcer	Local authority	Government
Respondent 30	5	28	Female	Bachelor Degree	Finance executive	Higher education	Government
Respondent 31	2	24	Female	Bachelor Degree	Accountant	Manufacturing	Private
Respondent 32	1	21	Male	Diploma	IT programmer	Telecommunication	Private
Respondent 33	2	23	Male	Diploma	Senior technician	Construction	Private

Results

Membership Categorization Device Analysis (MCDA) findings from NVivo

I successfully extracted eight categories of membership using the Nvivo analysis. Four major categories were consistent with the research framework, namely, proactive ability, proactive motivation, proactive opportunity, and proactive safety behavior. Four additional membership categories were identified, which were labelled workplace hazards, management initiatives on safety, physical injuries, and mental stress.

Proactive Ability

There was a consistency amongst respondents from the medical field, manufacturing, oil and gas industry, and aviation industries in identifying safety training as being associated with the ability to engage in proactive safety behavior. Safety training (e.g., college training and safety training) emerged as a strong catalyst for knowledge in understanding risk and preventing workplace accidents.

"We have what we call standard operating procedures (SOP). So....this SOP is to prevent actions that can cause accidents. We have to memorize everything.....we can't be careless." [R29].

"Oil and gas industry... Like my company.... we have a strict safety training program. Everybody has to attend (safety training). After being appointed as staff in my company, I have attended a seven-day safety training program to learn about safety. Also, if I am selected for offshore jobs, I have to complete a BOSIET1." [R17]

1 BOSIET stands for Basic Offshore Safety Induction and Emergency Training, a compulsory training program for individuals undertaking offshore tasks.

"We have a refresher training every year.....it is a requirement from the Aviation Department". [R29]. "I think my employers are providing a lot of safety training to us, and we have flight simulator and other safety training programs" [R24].

"We have mentors to remind us of safety and also continuous reminders from the safety team [R13]. They are monitoring our safety conducts....they will make sure we follow the safety procedures." [R23].

"We have to attend all safety training provided by the company.....sometimes if they discovered that we have yet to receive sufficient safety training, they would consider us as 'unfit' to work." [R17].

Not all respondents were exposed to safety training or aware that it existed, however:

"My company is a small company....the income is small.....a new company.....so to them....safety is not important." [R33]

"And I'm not too sure.. I think there must be a complete safety procedure provided." [R2]

"No. there is no safety training. And I don't think we are aware of safety." [R18]; and

"None. There is no safety training." [R20].

Many of the informants who were not exposed to safety training said that their knowledge of and approach to safety was mainly built from common sense and observation.

"We have not received any formal safety training. But they told me, my practical training was a form of training, per se. Then, I make an observation. And use my common sense...to understand about safety." [R23].

"I did not receive any formal training.....I learned from my mistakes... trial and error." [R30].

"They only told us to be careful with sharp objects. And the rest.....we learn(about safety) while we are doing our job..."[R14].

One significant finding from the analysis was the use of media for developing safety knowledge. Independent information-seeking behavior is a practice of safety knowledge enrichment adopted by the informants. All of the research informants were born between 1980 to 1994, the generation is typically known as Generation Y (Weiler, 2005). Media exposure and gratification have equipped them to be more likely to use media as a reference for safety information compared to the older generation. Informants believed that knowledge of safety is available online and hence accessible anytime and that this media assisted them in safety decision-making..

"I need to find (safety knowledge) myself. I need to be independent to search for something like safety training [R33], and I have to surf the internet to find the best solution (in safety)." [R18].

Informants also mentioned receiving safety knowledge from the broadcast media:

"I learned about safety from experience and awareness, from foreign TV shows like National Geographic, Discovery Channel, and also self-awareness." [R16].

Proactive Motivation

The findings of the qualitative analysis identified two distinct motivational mechanisms in operation in respect of choices about whether to act proactively in respect of safety; intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The intrinsic motivation stemmed from an individual's personal need for safety. For example;

"We love ourselves. We don't want anything bad to happen [R16], and For me, it's about responsibility...it's about choice." [R21].

"Well, because of the work nature....my safety, what if I fall sick....?" [R7].

" I did that for safety (my safety) reasons....." [R 14].

The interview also revealed that previous accidents experienced by a co-worker encouraged them to be actively engaged in proactive safety behavior for their good:

"My colleague met with an accident (workplace accident) before... After that (the accident), I am..more.. aware and cautious[R12].

Informants who were extrinsically motivated agreed that other aspects moved them to engage in proactive safety behavior. *"Self-conscious. My daughter has a respiratory problem. Therefore, I need to take extra precaution [R27]*

"Wash my hands thoroughly before I touch or come in contact with the children." [R13].

Another informant, a secondary school teacher, thought proactive safety behavior is important not only to her but also to people around her, such as her students:

" Well, because it doesn't only impact me but other people too." [R16].

Respondent 2 [R2] suggested a slightly different idea when he mentioned a job opportunity. He suggested proactive behavior as a career advancement (self-improvement) mechanism, for example;

"When people (the employers) know all these things (safety boots), they will be pleased to give us a job.[R2]."

As a musician and sound engineer, Respondent 3 had to carry heavy musical instruments and facilities such as speakers and audio controller. Upon seeing the risk, he bought a pair of safety boots himself, and the safety boot symbolized autonomy. The proactive opportunity also relates to self-empowerment. Acknowledgment and the feelings of appreciated encouraged the young workers to contribute to proactive safety behavior. The informants believed that continuous safety improvement is essential not only for themselves but also to the co-workers and the organization."

"I feel proud of.....because I helped people. At least I've done my job (make changes) [R10], and For me, it's about responsibility.....I have contributed to the workplace. I have made the office a better place to work." [R21].

Proactive Opportunity

Technology emerged as one potential constraint on the opportunity to engage in proactive safety behavior. One informant, a retail superstore team leader, indicated that most of his employees were exposed to occupational risk and injury by virtue of where they worked. According to him, those who worked at the poultry or seafood department were at significant risk of injury while performing their jobs.

"I give you an example when cutting fish or meat; we use machines. That is risky..... when we use that machine." [R1].

In other cases, a lack of social support inhibited proactive safety behavior engagement. When an informant was asked whether talking to her supervisor helped her to improve safety at the workplace, she indicated that the action was useless:

"I don't think I will benefit from that (supervisory support). Also, other people are not doing anything." [R12].

The availability of other work opportunities, such as employee involvement schemes, has stimulated proactive safety behavior. This encouraged informants to make positive changes to workplace safety:

"I want to do more. It makes me feel that I can change the workplace (safety). [R14]"

"I know that I can contribute something. I keep trying to make recommendations to improve (safety) because I know I can change the work system." [R25].

Proactive Safety Behavior

Respondent 1, a retail superstore supervisor, explained about his task of transferring and depositing money from his office to the bank. He understood that he exposed himself to danger and 65 that a safety Standard Operation Procedure (SOP) for this task was not available. Therefore, he has taken a proactive measure.

"I understand that transporting a lot amount of money to the bank every day is very risky, I might probably get robbedso I ask a policeman at a mobile police station in front of my office to escort me to the bank" [R1].

Sometimes adverse working environment trigger actions to rectify the situation. The concern was raised due to the informant's safety awareness. R3 explained the way he attempted to initiate and take extra precautions for safety:

"Over there (the location), the installation is permanent. So we try to copy (create) cable installation which is almost the same (to the permanent cable installation); for example, the installation is called 'Half Moon' (Installation Technique). (This is) To cover the wire and prevent leakages, when it is placed on a rod (steel bar). We need to do our best to create that (cable installation) as secure as possible; even it is not as secure as the permanent installation." [R3].

Incidents that happened in the past can play an important role in shaping a person's proactive safety behavior. An informant who was previously hospitalized due to Dengue Fever had to escalate initiatives to avoid any unfortunate future events. Dengue Fever caused by Aedes Mosquitoes was one of the most considerable health problems in Malaysia. Contaminated and unkempt surroundings exacerbated it.

"I was hospitalized due to dengue fever. On that day, I felt feverish. I think I might have Dengue Fever. So I told them I need to leave because I am not feeling well.....I was not the first person affected (with Dengue Fever).....Now, I bought Shieldtox (aerosol spray to kill the mosquitoes) with my money. My boss (the manager) didn't know about that [R18].

Another informant met an accident while performing his job and caused him to lose a part of his thumb. The incident happened after six months since he started his job.

"Yes. I experienced an accident. I was injured.. because of a machine.. that is a manual CNC machine (A machine used to cut steels and boards). The manual CNC machine is not automatic, So we need to adjust it ourselves; we have to push and pull it manually. We moved it based on three axes; X, Y, and Z axes. (It will go) Either up or down (and), we need to handle it.. or else it might be affecting (the product). The machine will make a lot of loud noise. So, when we handle the machine, we are not...our attention (lacking). Yes, I did not give much attention; I was distracted. I didn't realize that I slightly pushed that machine, and it hit my fingers.....I cut my fingers. I learned my lesson from the accidents... Since then, I will place the items on the machines and then monitor the process from afar." [R33].

An informant who worked as a law enforcer for a government Ministry determined to write a proposal to purchase group insurance after an unusual hit and run accident, and threats that had been made with weapons such as machetes and knives. The incident happened due to a disagreement between his team and fish market retailers.

" Firstly it all started when we got splashed (with a bucket of filthy water), chased away or threatened with a chopping knife and many more, so we do not want that to happen again. We are traumatized..... To be honest, every month, I will give at least one (proposal to

purchase group insurance). Or at least once in two months. It's like whenever there's a meeting, I will bring it up 67 for the suggestion. In 12 proposals, not even one was accepted. So sometimes I can't figure out why and it's a dead-end [R25].

However, he also mentioned that other than proposing to purchase group insurance, he came up with a strategy to avoid future risk.

When my suggestion (to purchase group insurance) was never considered, I come out with a new action. For high-risk markets like, for example, in Klang Valley, if I heard any information about them (the market retailers) knowing we are coming, I will change (the operation) to another market. Or if the situation is quite hastened at the market, we will focus on monitoring the supermarkets. Because, if there's a problem or incidents that happened at the supermarket, we will complain straight to their headquarters. So the risk is slightly lower. I instructed my colleagues who are pregnant, to stay at the office for data entry and clerical works. That was some drastic action that I took on my own." [R25].

An electrical short circuit is a condition that can cause future loss, such as fire or even lost lives. One informant, a secondary school teacher, described proactive behavior that she had engaged in to prevent accidents due to electrical faults:

There's one instance when a plug is switched on, causing a short circuit. It is in the examination room. It's only a short circuit, not to the extent of unattended exposed cables. Ok, in that particular room, there's this main switchboard. I went to the board and switched it on repeatedly. I recognized the faulty plug or switch so that the particular plug will not be used until repaired. I went and told the person in charge of the room about the problem, and that person informed the Deputy Director who will then instructed the school's technician to check on which part that caused the short circuit before repairing it. If it involves faulty appliances, then it will be replaced..... Oh, one major thing that has happened in my school is that the library has been on fire once. It was not during school days, and it was at 5 am. A short circuit happened in an audio-visual room. It exploded and started a fire.....It happened because of the school condition....old buildings." [R6]. 68 An informant also revealed that although he could see serious safety issues at his workplace and took some action to bring this to the attention of management, he carried on with work as usual:

"There is one incident at the camp. The camp was built in the year 2000 but there are some soil movements. Up to this point, we received no eviction notice. I know that this can cause problems.....I've talked to the manager of this camp about the condition. However, we continue (to work) as usual....., although we can see some serious soil movement." [R5].

Another informant, a public institution employee, described her initiative in responding to a hazardous condition at her workplace.

"Open ceiling or maybe incomplete (construction) works. It was the contractor, he came to fix something, but once (the job) completed, he left the ceiling wide open. When I saw the gap between the ceiling....I made a complaint through the system... The university system... A person in charge will respond to us within a few working days. However, the response was quite prompt. The contractor came and fixed the ceiling within three hours. I think it also has something to do with audits. And we have audits....every year. Whenever they see that (irregularities)...they will give us a warning... We can be reprimanded with OFI, NCR (Auditing Standard)." [R30].

Workplace Hazards

Workplace hazards are defined as any source of potential damage, harm, or adverse health effects on something or someone under certain conditions at work (Mitolo & Montazemi,

2014) physically or mentally. I have organized the data according to six types of workplace hazards that can be identified; safety hazards, work organization hazards, physical hazards, ergonomic hazards, chemical hazards, and biological hazards (www.osha.gov/dte/grant_materials/fy10/sh-20839-10/circle_chart.pdf).

Safety hazards. Safety hazards are a common hazard that occurs in the workplace such as electrical hazards (short circuits), working from heights, tripping hazards, and machinery-related hazards (Matern & Koneczny, 2007). The most prevalent safety hazards reported by the informants were electrical short circuits.

In the first few months after I started working here.....there are a few cases of short circuit.....i think was due to usage overload [R31]

“The computer had to be switched on all the time....it is normal considering our work nature (computer programmer)....but....it can cause electrical short circuit too.....usage overload....[R32]”.

Work Organization Hazards

Work organization hazards are hazards or stressors that cause stress, such as workload, lack of respect, or lack of control (Jeffrey Hillgert, 2013). Some of the informants were exposed to verbal and non-verbal harassment from other employees or clients. Respondent 20 [R20], a law enforcer was suffering from verbal harassment and sexual harassment by her clients, for example;

They uttered verbal threats to me. He said something like.....he can do something to me.....(speak) loudly.....in public....he is not happy with it (the summon)...[R20] and I was sexually harassed.....by a truck driver.....I think he was drunk.....he showed me his private part. I was shocked..... [R20].

According to Respondent 20, there was no preventive measure taken by her employer despite the rising number of cases involving sexual harassment towards female law enforcers. The only preventive measure they have taken was to write a report in a logbook as future references, should the situation worsen.

Drug abuse is another form of work organization hazard that I have identified from the interviews. Respondent 2 mentioned that, as a musician and sound engineer, he is at-risk of becoming a drug addict. Some musicians got involved in drug abuse due to peer pressure, while others used cannabis for endurance.

The risk is to become a drug addict. Because most of the people in this industry are using drugs, it's like a lifestyle...For me, it isn't a big issue. Sometimes we didn't know that they (the co-workers) are high (on drugs). So we asked them (to do some task), they are (the reaction) is just too slow. We got mad at them, and we felt tense. Why did they refuse to work? Oh.. it turned out that they were high (on drugs). So then we understand. Oh.. it takes time (for them to recover) about half an hour, and then they will be okay. But they are risking their lives when they take it (cannabis). [R2]

Physical Hazards

Physical hazards are factors within the environment that can harm the body without necessarily touching it (McSween & Moran, 2017). Respondent 28 [R28], an informant from a manufacturing company, mentioned radiation. Her job was to test the electromagnetic effect on a product. For that procedure, she was required to monitor the electromagnetic

effect in a radiation room. She expressed concern for her safety and tried to minimize contacts with that room:

'The problem with the radiation room is like this. My department is located very close to the radiation room. Limited spaces. They can't build the radiation room elsewhere. Although the room is locked and closed most of the time, there are chances of radiation leakage. But we can not do anything. As much as we can, we will try to maximize safety precautions. And pregnant women are not allowed to be stationed in our department. I will not go near to that room if I don't have to [R28].

Chemical Hazards

Respondent 17 [R17] is an informant from heavy industry (cement). His daily job involved working with chemical solutions like kiln (a type of solvent). He did mention about having breathing difficulty during the first few months of his employment. On top of that, he also experienced eye irritation due to the dusty working environment. However, according to him, to overcome these health issues, his company provided annual medical check-up and other medical benefits which are sufficient and necessary.

I have to deal with dust, vapor, and fumes from the kiln (solvent). It was difficult in the beginning. I can say that my health condition was pretty bad. I was not comfortable....and adjusting to the environment.....but since the company provided medical benefits, I think it is quite okay.....but I don't think I want to work here forever.....I am concern (of my medical condition). [R17]

Biological Hazards

Biological hazards are not a constraint to infection through blood and other body fluids but also from insect and wild animals (Walton & Rogers, 2017). In an interview with 71 one academic staff, he agreed that biological hazards might cause by monkeys and wild boars. Respondent 4 [R4] for example, agreed that the rapid development around his workplace had exacerbated this condition. The animals are losing their natural habitat.; wildlife began to terrorize human space for food.

There are monkeys, wild boars....these animals are everywhere.....they came to our workplace in the evening...they are looking for food. Sometimes they attacked us.....I am afraid if they have like.....you know....maybe like in the Outbreak movie...who knows they are infected by something.....[R4]

Ergonomic Hazards

Ergonomic hazards occur when the type of work, body positions, and working conditions put a strain on the body (Shockey, Luckhaupt, Groenewold, & Lu, 2018). Three of the informants mentioned about their working experience and ergonomic hazards. Two of the informants (R3, R16) are working in the music industry. R3 and R16 commented about having to endure back pain caused by moving heavy things to places.

I had to carry the speaker.....because this is a small company....so we cannot hire the Bangladeshi workers. I was hospitalized due to back pain and slip disc. I cannot carry heavy loads anymore..... [R3], and When I was working as a sound engineer, I had to carry heavy loads. It is normal. Everybody has to do it. But now...I begin to feel the impact...I constantly experienced back pain. I think because of the heavy loads [R16].

Respondent 1, on the other hand, had to carry heavy carpets;

During the Eid festival, I had to carry bundles of 'songket2' materials from 'Utama Complex' to 'Medan Mara.' I didn't think so much. My concern is I have to send the materials to my clients. I had to walk about 500metres and used the escalator instead of the elevator. Since then, my arms feelsometimes very sore... [R1]. 2 Songket is a type of heavy fabric that people normally used to make traditional costumes.

Management Initiatives on Safety

Through the interviews, informants commented on their perception of safety efforts made by employers.

Personal Protective Initiatives

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is mandatory training and equipment (John et al., 2017) provided by the employers to protect the wearers from occupational injuries and accidents (Villano et al., 2017). Although the employers are responsible for providing and monitoring the usage of PPE (Afrifa et al., 2017; Carballo-Leyeda et al., 2017), however, the findings revealed otherwise. From the interview, it can be determined that the protective equipment owned by the informants were their protective initiatives and not PPE. The informants who employed by small and medium-sized companies purchased the equipment they presumed as PPE for protection. Quite often, the equipment was at the lowest quality and the most basic protection but affordable. The musicians (R2 and R16) bought a pair of safety boots to cover their feet while working with heavy musical instruments;

I bought a pair of safety boots, just a normal (ordinary) one....not expensive....enough to work with....and the only (pair of boots) that I can afford (to buy) with my salary [R2].

Yes, I buy (the safety boot) myself [R16].

Respondent 14 [R14] who had to do outdoor jobs were a concern of the amount of heat he had to endure every day. Therefore, he bought a farmer's hat.

It is so hot.....so I bought a gardener's hat. The hat that farmers usually wear [R14].

Other examples of personal protective initiatives demonstrated by the employees were mentioned by Respondent 26 [R26]. Working as a law enforcer and having to deal with civilians, this law enforcer is aware of the risk that may cause occupational accidents. Hence, as law enforcer who is not to entitle to carry weapons while performing their jobs, one of the easiest ways to protect themselves is by learning martial arts;

I learned 'Silat3' to protect myself.....some people won't be happy with the parking ticket or summon. If I was threatened or attacked, at least I can protect myself [R26].

3 Silat is a form of martial arts, predominantly taught and learned by Malay community.

Physical Injuries

Some informants have experienced physical injuries while doing their jobs. Respondent 4 (R4) had ten banquet chairs fell on top of him when he was preparing the banquet room for a function:

I was wounded because ten banquet chairs fell on top of me. We were told what to do (about the job) but not safety.

Respondent 3 (R3) also experienced scratches and wounds when a speaker fell on his toes:

"So after it (the speaker) fell, I hold the speaker with my hand to stop it from falling further down.....that caused scratches and injuries.

Respondent 33 (R33) also had his finger cut while operating a machine.

I am very young, just started working.....no gloves on.....I didn't realize anything until the machine cut a small portion of my finger." [R33].

Mental Stress

In this category, mental stress is explained by looking at two aspects; the type of stress and the coping process. Overall, most of the informants did experience manageable stress caused by workloads.

(Heavy) Workload.. maybe... Honestly speaking, I think all we will have this problem... work stress, maybe, as long as we are in the academic field [R4].

Physiological strain, such as a headache was also experienced by an informant whenever she had to work based on targets.

Especially when I need to achieve the target. I will suffer from dizziness and migraine (because of stress) [R9].

The informants revealed that social support is one of the most common coping strategies for overcoming mental stress. Respondent 5 [R5] agreed that talking to a close family member helped her to overcome stress.

I talk to my husband or my family [R5].

A medical officer mentioned that having access to mentoring and coaching program helped her to manage work stress.

We will share our problems with our mentor. We also have a coach...a specialist.....its like coaching. We learn a lot of things through this coaching and mentoring [R27].

Professional help like counselling and therapy program was provided by the airline company to assist with mental support;

Normally they (the company) will call the doctor to the office for therapy [R29].

However, stress can also occur due to inadequate workloads:

(I will be under a lot of stress) when I have so many things to do.....or when I have nothing else to do [R2].

The above informant mentioned that this happened because of his passion in his job.

Acknowledgement

This research report is a part of main author's PhD. research thesis. Special thanks to Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia that supported the writing of this research under Publication Encouragement Grant (DPP-2015-FSSK).

Discussion and Conclusion

To develop and sustain a safe working environment is not an easy task. It requires a coordinated effort from the employers and the employees. However, in cases where the employers are unacquainted with safety importance, employees often initiate or take charge of their safety. Occasionally, employers who failed to provide a safe working environment are those who are struggling with financial stability. Small and medium-sized industries often neglected the importance of safety primarily because they are not able to see the cost-benefit effect. Most small-medium sized industries have short-term business planning, often relying on government funds to operate. The allocation is limited and sufficient to support the business operation without extra funding for the training and development program. The Malaysian Government is concerned about this situation. Hence the government-provided safety training scheme under the Human Resources Development Fund (HRDF). Despite this initiative, the number of workplace accidents keeps rising (SOCISO, 2017).

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