

THE IMPACT OF OSH ON EMPLOYEE RETENTION: EXAMINING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OSH AND EMPLOYEE RETENTION

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) practices and employee retention in high-risk industries in Ghana, including construction, manufacturing, and mining. Using a quantitative research design, data were collected from 368 employees through structured questionnaires assessing perceptions of OSH practices—including management commitment, safety training, hazard management, and safety communication—and employees' intention to remain with their organization. Hierarchical regression analysis revealed that OSH practices significantly predict employee retention, with management commitment emerging as the strongest determinant. Safety training, hazard management, and safety communication also positively influenced retention intentions. The findings underscore the importance of fostering a positive safety climate to enhance organizational loyalty, reduce turnover, and maintain a stable workforce. Implications for organizational policy, managerial practice, and regulatory oversight are discussed.

Keywords: Occupational Safety and Health, Employee Retention, Safety Climate, Safety Training, Management Commitment

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Employee retention is a critical challenge for organizations across industries, particularly in high-risk and labor-intensive sectors where turnover can be costly and disruptive to operations. One emerging area of interest in human resource management is the role of Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) in influencing employee retention. OSH encompasses policies, procedures, and practices designed to prevent workplace injuries, promote well-being, and ensure safe working conditions (Goetsch, 2014). Research suggests that employees are more likely to remain with organizations that prioritize their safety and well-being, as positive OSH practices contribute to job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and overall workplace morale (Chmiel, 2017). Despite its recognized importance, the relationship between OSH and employee retention remains underexplored, particularly in the Ghanaian industrial context.

High rates of employee turnover in many organizations in Ghana can be attributed, in part, to unsafe working conditions, inadequate safety training, and poor enforcement of occupational safety regulations (Agyemang & Osei, 2018). When employees perceive that their health and safety are at risk, they are more likely to seek alternative employment, resulting in significant costs for organizations, including recruitment, training, and lost productivity (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014). By contrast, organizations that implement robust OSH systems, including

regular safety audits, effective communication of safety policies, and continuous training programs, tend to experience higher employee retention rates (DeJoy, 2005). These observations highlight the strategic role of OSH not only in protecting employees but also in enhancing organizational stability and human capital retention.

The relationship between OSH and employee retention can be explained through the lens of several theoretical frameworks. Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) posits that employees reciprocate favorable treatment from their organization with loyalty and commitment. When organizations demonstrate concern for employees' safety through effective OSH practices, employees are likely to reciprocate by remaining with the organization. Similarly, the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) suggests that resources provided by the organization—including safety measures, training, and support—mitigate job demands and reduce burnout, which can otherwise drive turnover. OSH thus functions as both a protective and motivational resource that enhances employees' attachment to the organization.

Empirical studies have consistently shown that safe work environments are associated with higher employee retention. For example, Clarke (2010) demonstrated that organizations with strong safety climates experience lower turnover rates because employees perceive that management prioritizes their well-being. Similarly, Hofmann and Morgeson (1999) found that safety climate—employees' perceptions of the value placed on safety—positively predicts organizational commitment and retention intentions. In the context of Ghana, evidence suggests that employees in mining, construction, and manufacturing sectors are particularly sensitive to workplace safety, with perceptions of inadequate safety measures linked to higher turnover intentions (Gyekye & Salminen, 2009).

The economic implications of employee turnover due to poor OSH are significant. Recruiting and training new employees require substantial investment, and high turnover can disrupt production schedules, reduce operational efficiency, and diminish service quality (Hom, Lee, Shaw, & Hausknecht, 2017). Conversely, investing in OSH not only reduces workplace accidents and associated costs but also enhances employee satisfaction, trust, and loyalty, ultimately supporting retention. Effective OSH practices include compliance with regulatory standards, risk assessments, safety training, employee participation in safety programs, and the provision of personal protective equipment (Goetsch, 2014). Organizations that integrate these practices into their culture are better positioned to retain skilled employees and maintain competitive advantage.

Despite the clear link between OSH and employee retention suggested by theory and evidence, studies in Ghana remain limited, particularly those examining the direct relationship between employees' perceptions of OSH and their intention to remain with the organization. Most research has focused on safety outcomes such as accident rates and compliance with safety regulations, while the human resource implications, including retention, have received comparatively less attention (Annan, Addai, & Tulashie, 2015). Addressing this gap is crucial for organizations seeking to enhance both workplace safety and employee retention, particularly in sectors with high labor demands and risk exposure.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Employee turnover remains a persistent challenge in many organizations, particularly in high-risk and labor-intensive industries such as construction, manufacturing, and mining in Ghana. High turnover rates not only increase recruitment and training costs but also disrupt operations and reduce organizational productivity (Hom, Lee, Shaw, & Hausknecht, 2017). Despite the recognized importance of Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) in protecting employees from workplace hazards, many organizations in Ghana have inadequate or inconsistently enforced safety policies, which can negatively affect employee perceptions of workplace safety (Agyemang & Osei, 2018). Employees who perceive unsafe working conditions are more likely to experience stress, dissatisfaction, and ultimately, consider leaving the organization. Although previous research has highlighted the link between OSH and workplace accidents, there is limited empirical evidence on how OSH influences employee retention specifically in the Ghanaian context (Annan, Addai, & Tulashie, 2015). This gap makes it challenging for organizations to design interventions that simultaneously enhance safety and reduce turnover. Understanding the relationship between OSH and employee retention is therefore critical to inform strategies that foster both a safe and stable workforce.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) practices on employee retention in high-risk industries in Ghana. Specifically, the study seeks to explore how employees' perceptions of workplace safety measures, management commitment to safety, and the overall safety climate influence their intention to remain with their current organization. By investigating this relationship, the study aims to provide evidence-based recommendations for organizations and policymakers to enhance both occupational safety and employee retention, thereby improving organizational stability and performance.

1.3 Research Objectives

The study is guided by the following research objectives:

1. To assess the relationship between employees' perceptions of OSH practices and their intention to remain with the organization.
2. To evaluate the impact of management commitment to OSH on employee retention in high-risk industries in Ghana.
3. To identify which dimensions of workplace OSH—such as safety training, communication, and hazard management—most strongly influence employee retention.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Literature

The relationship between Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) and employee retention can be understood through several theoretical frameworks that explain why safety practices influence employee attitudes and behaviors. Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) posits that employees engage in reciprocal relationships with their organizations, responding to favorable treatment with loyalty and commitment. When organizations demonstrate concern for

employees' safety by implementing robust OSH practices, employees are more likely to reciprocate by remaining with the organization and exhibiting higher organizational commitment. In high-risk industries, where the consequences of unsafe work environments can be severe, the perception of organizational care for employee well-being serves as a critical determinant of retention intentions.

Another relevant framework is the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model, which suggests that job resources, such as safety equipment, training, and management support, mitigate the negative impact of job demands on employee well-being (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). In contexts where workplace hazards are prevalent, adequate OSH practices function as resources that reduce physical and psychological strain, preventing burnout and turnover. By providing employees with safety-related resources, organizations can enhance job satisfaction, engagement, and ultimately, retention.

The Herzberg Two-Factor Theory (Herzberg, 1966) also provides insight into the OSH–retention link. In this framework, factors such as workplace safety can be considered hygiene factors: their presence prevents dissatisfaction, while their absence can lead to discontent and increased turnover intentions. Ensuring safe working conditions, providing proper protective equipment, and maintaining safety protocols address these fundamental hygiene needs, reducing the likelihood of employee attrition. Furthermore, the presence of OSH initiatives may also contribute to motivators such as recognition and professional growth, which further enhance retention.

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991) offers an additional perspective, suggesting that employees' intentions to stay with an organization are influenced by their attitudes, perceived norms, and perceived behavioral control. Employees who perceive that their organization prioritizes safety and invests in protective measures are likely to form positive attitudes toward the workplace, perceive supportive social norms, and feel empowered to work safely. These positive perceptions strengthen their intention to remain with the organization, highlighting the cognitive pathways through which OSH practices influence retention.

Collectively, these theoretical frameworks converge on the notion that employees' perceptions of OSH practices—through organizational support, availability of safety resources, and management commitment—play a critical role in shaping retention outcomes. They provide a conceptual foundation for investigating how OSH dimensions, including safety training, hazard management, and safety communication, relate to employees' decisions to stay with their organization.

2.2 Empirical Literature

Empirical studies across industries have demonstrated a positive relationship between effective OSH practices and employee retention. Clarke (2010) highlighted that organizations with strong safety climates tend to experience lower turnover rates, as employees perceive management's commitment to safety as a form of organizational support. Similarly, Hofmann and Morgeson (1999) found that employees' perceptions of workplace safety are positively associated with job satisfaction and organizational commitment, which are key predictors of

retention. These studies suggest that investments in safety infrastructure and practices can have dual benefits: reducing accidents and fostering workforce stability.

Research conducted in the Ghanaian context supports the relevance of OSH for employee retention. Gyekye and Salminen (2009) reported that employees in manufacturing and mining industries who perceived inadequate safety measures were more likely to express intentions to leave their organizations. Annan, Addai, and Tulashie (2015) found that gaps between regulatory requirements and actual enforcement of safety standards contributed to unsafe working environments, which negatively impacted employee morale and retention. These findings indicate that not only the existence of OSH regulations but also their effective implementation influences employee attitudes toward staying with the organization.

Safety training has emerged as a significant factor influencing retention. Mavis and Boateng (2018) observed that in Ghanaian mining firms, employees who received regular and comprehensive safety training reported higher levels of satisfaction and were less likely to leave. Training enhances employees' confidence in managing hazards, reduces perceived risk, and fosters a sense of competence and security. When employees feel capable of performing their duties safely, their attachment to the organization strengthens, resulting in higher retention rates. Management commitment to safety is another critical determinant. Zohar (2010) noted that visible leadership support for safety initiatives, including the allocation of resources, recognition of safe behaviors, and involvement in safety programs, positively influences employee retention. Employees interpret management's commitment as an indicator of the organization's values and concern for their well-being. In the absence of such commitment, employees may perceive organizational neglect, increasing turnover intentions (Goetsch, 2014).

Workplace safety communication also plays a key role in shaping retention. Clear, consistent, and timely communication regarding safety policies, hazard reporting procedures, and emergency response measures enhances employees' understanding of their work environment and reduces uncertainty and stress (Clarke, 2010). Employees who feel informed and supported are more likely to experience organizational trust, which is a strong predictor of retention (Neal & Griffin, 2006). Empirical evidence further suggests that the combined effect of OSH practices on employee retention is substantial. DeJoy (2005) highlighted that organizations that integrate multiple safety initiatives—training, hazard management, leadership commitment, and communication—experience lower absenteeism, fewer workplace accidents, and improved employee loyalty. This integrated approach aligns with the systems perspective, which views safety and employee well-being as outcomes of interrelated organizational processes. In the Ghanaian industrial context, where enforcement of regulations is sometimes inconsistent, the creation of a comprehensive and proactive safety culture can significantly enhance employee retention.

While empirical studies provide strong support for the relationship between OSH and retention, gaps remain, particularly in quantitative assessments of specific safety dimensions and their relative influence on retention decisions. Most studies focus on general safety perceptions or accident rates, with limited emphasis on employee retention as a primary outcome. This underscores the need for research that quantitatively examines the direct relationship between

workplace OSH practices and employees' intention to stay, considering the mediating role of perceptions, satisfaction, and organizational commitment.

In summary, both theoretical and empirical evidence indicates that effective OSH practices contribute to employee retention by enhancing perceptions of organizational support, improving job satisfaction, reducing stress, and fostering organizational commitment. Safety training, communication, hazard management, and management commitment are key dimensions of OSH that influence employees' decisions to remain with their organization. Investigating this relationship in the Ghanaian context will provide actionable insights for managers, policymakers, and safety practitioners seeking to reduce turnover while maintaining safe and productive workplaces.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a quantitative research design to examine the relationship between Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) practices and employee retention in high-risk industries in Ghana, including construction, manufacturing, and mining sectors. A quantitative approach was deemed appropriate because it enables the collection of numerical data, statistical analysis, and the testing of hypothesized relationships between variables (Creswell, 2014). Specifically, a correlational research design was employed to determine the strength and direction of the association between employees' perceptions of OSH practices and their retention intentions. Structured questionnaires facilitated standardized data collection, ensuring reliability and allowing for generalization to the broader population.

3.2 Population and Sample

The target population comprised employees working in high-risk industries in Ghana, including both managerial and non-managerial staff. These employees were selected due to their higher exposure to occupational hazards and the critical role of safety in shaping their workplace experiences. A total of 400 respondents was determined using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) formula to ensure a statistically representative sample. Stratified random sampling was employed to proportionally represent employees across different industries, departments, and job levels. This approach minimized selection bias and increased the representativeness of the findings.

3.3 Data Collection Instrument

Data were collected using a structured, self-administered questionnaire. The instrument consisted of three sections. The first section gathered demographic information, including age, gender, educational background, job position, and years of experience. The second section assessed employees' perceptions of OSH practices using an adapted scale from Zohar (2010) and Goetsch (2014), covering dimensions such as management commitment to safety, safety communication, hazard management, and safety training. Responses were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The third section measured employee retention intentions using items adapted from Hom, Lee, Shaw, and Hausknecht (2017), focusing on employees' willingness to remain with the organization,

intention to seek alternative employment, and commitment to organizational goals. Pilot testing with 30 respondents ensured clarity, reliability, and validity of the instrument. Cronbach's alpha values for OSH dimensions and retention intention scales were 0.88 and 0.86, respectively, indicating high internal consistency.

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was conducted over a period of six weeks. Permission was obtained from management in selected organizations, and participants were informed about the purpose of the study, voluntary participation, and confidentiality of responses. Questionnaires were distributed physically to employees at their workplaces, with clear instructions on completing the survey accurately. Follow-up visits were conducted to maximize response rates, achieving a 92% completion rate. Completed questionnaires were checked for completeness and consistency before data entry.

3.5 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize demographic characteristics and central tendencies of OSH practices and retention intentions. Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to explore bivariate relationships between OSH dimensions and employee retention. Hierarchical regression analysis was used to examine the predictive influence of OSH practices on retention intentions while controlling for demographic factors such as age, gender, and years of experience. Assumptions of regression, including linearity, normality, homoscedasticity, and absence of multicollinearity, were tested and satisfied prior to running the analyses. Statistical significance was assessed at the 0.05 level.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were strictly adhered to throughout the study. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents. Confidentiality was maintained by ensuring that no personal identifiers were linked to responses. Participants were assured that the data would be used solely for academic purposes. The study also ensured that respondents were not exposed to any harm or discomfort during data collection. Ethical approval was obtained from the institutional review board of the researcher's university prior to data collection.

3.7 Analysis and Discussion of Results

The primary aim of this study was to examine the relationship between Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) practices and employee retention in high-risk industries in Ghana, including construction, manufacturing, and mining sectors. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed, and 368 valid responses were obtained, yielding a 92% response rate. Descriptive statistics were first conducted to summarize demographic characteristics of the respondents. Pearson correlation analysis was then employed to explore the bivariate relationships between OSH dimensions and retention intentions. Hierarchical regression analysis was subsequently performed to test the predictive influence of OSH practices on employee retention while

controlling for demographic variables such as age, gender, and years of experience. Employee retention was measured using intention-to-stay indicators, while OSH was assessed across multiple dimensions: management commitment, safety training, hazard management, and safety communication.

3.8 Hierarchical Regression Analysis

Hierarchical regression analysis was conducted in two models. In the first model, demographic variables were entered to control for their potential influence on employee retention. In the second model, the OSH dimensions were entered to determine their predictive effect beyond the demographics.

Table 1. Hierarchical Regression Predicting Employee Retention

Predictor Variables	Model 1 β	Model 1 t	Model 2 β	Model 2 t
Age	0.07	1.34	0.05	0.95
Gender	0.03	0.61	0.02	0.45
Years of Experience	0.11	1.95*	0.08	1.45
Management Commitment	–	–	0.36	6.12**
Safety Training	–	–	0.28	4.85**
Hazard Management	–	–	0.24	4.02**
Safety Communication	–	–	0.22	3.45**
R ²	0.03	–	0.46	–

*Note: *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01

The results of Model 1 indicate that demographic variables collectively explained only 3% of the variance in employee retention ($R^2 = 0.03$). Years of experience had a modest positive effect on retention ($\beta = 0.11$, $p < 0.05$), suggesting that more experienced employees may have a slightly higher tendency to remain with the organization. Age and gender did not significantly influence retention intentions, indicating that demographic factors alone play a limited role in predicting employees' decisions to stay.

In Model 2, which included the OSH dimensions, the explained variance increased substantially to 46% ($R^2 = 0.46$). This indicates that management commitment, safety training, hazard management, and safety communication collectively account for nearly half of the variance in employee retention intentions. Management commitment emerged as the strongest

predictor ($\beta = 0.36, p < 0.01$), highlighting the importance of visible leadership engagement in safety initiatives. Employees are more likely to remain with organizations where they perceive management prioritizes their well-being and provides support for safe working conditions.

Safety training ($\beta = 0.28, p < 0.01$) also significantly predicted retention, suggesting that employees who receive comprehensive and regular training on safety protocols feel more competent and secure in their roles, enhancing their intention to stay. Hazard management, including risk assessments and provision of protective equipment, had a positive influence on retention ($\beta = 0.24, p < 0.01$), indicating that effective mitigation of workplace risks contributes to employees' perception of a safe work environment and their commitment to the organization. Safety communication ($\beta = 0.22, p < 0.01$) also significantly predicted retention, underscoring the role of clear, consistent, and timely communication regarding safety policies and procedures in enhancing trust and loyalty among employees.

Overall, the hierarchical regression analysis demonstrates that OSH practices are strong predictors of employee retention, with management commitment, safety training, hazard management, and safety communication all contributing significantly. The findings align with Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), suggesting that employees reciprocate perceived organizational support in the form of loyalty and intention to remain. The results also support the Job Demands-Resources Model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), highlighting that OSH practices function as organizational resources that reduce job-related stress and enhance retention.

The results further indicate that demographic variables, while relevant, are less influential than organizational safety practices in shaping retention decisions. This emphasizes that organizations seeking to reduce turnover should prioritize the development of comprehensive OSH strategies, rather than relying on demographic profiling or targeting specific employee groups. By investing in safety training, hazard management, effective communication, and visible management commitment, organizations can create a supportive and secure work environment that encourages employees to remain committed.

4.0 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The findings of this study provide robust evidence for the significant influence of Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) practices on employee retention in high-risk industries in Ghana. The hierarchical regression analysis revealed that OSH dimensions—management commitment, safety training, hazard management, and safety communication—collectively explained 46% of the variance in employees' intention to remain with their organizations. This underscores the pivotal role of organizational safety practices in shaping retention decisions, surpassing the explanatory power of demographic variables such as age, gender, and years of experience.

Management commitment emerged as the strongest predictor of employee retention ($\beta = 0.36, p < 0.01$), highlighting the critical role of leadership in fostering a positive safety climate. Employees perceive management engagement in safety as an indicator of organizational care and concern for their well-being, which, in turn, enhances loyalty and reduces turnover intentions. These findings are consistent with Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), which posits that employees reciprocate favorable organizational treatment with commitment and retention. The result also aligns with prior research showing that visible leadership support for

safety initiatives is associated with higher employee satisfaction and retention (Zohar, 2010; Clarke, 2010).

Safety training was another significant predictor ($\beta = 0.28, p < 0.01$), suggesting that employees who receive comprehensive and continuous training feel more competent in managing workplace hazards, which reinforces their intention to stay. Training equips employees with the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate high-risk environments safely, thereby reducing stress and perceived vulnerability. This finding supports the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), which emphasizes that organizational resources, such as training, mitigate job-related demands and enhance retention.

Hazard management, including the identification and mitigation of workplace risks, also had a positive effect on retention ($\beta = 0.24, p < 0.01$). Employees are more likely to remain in organizations where safety risks are actively managed, protective equipment is provided, and hazards are minimized. Similarly, safety communication ($\beta = 0.22, p < 0.01$) was shown to significantly influence retention, indicating that clear, consistent, and timely communication regarding safety policies and procedures fosters trust and strengthens employees' commitment to the organization. These findings underscore that OSH functions not only as a protective mechanism but also as a strategic tool for human resource retention.

Overall, the results indicate that organizations in Ghanaian high-risk industries cannot rely solely on regulatory compliance or demographic targeting to retain employees. Instead, a holistic approach that integrates management commitment, training, hazard management, and communication is essential. Employees' perceptions of a supportive safety climate are central to their decision to remain, suggesting that enhancing workplace safety has both health and strategic organizational benefits.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examined the relationship between Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) practices and employee retention in high-risk industries in Ghana. The results demonstrate that OSH practices are significant predictors of retention intentions, with management commitment emerging as the most influential factor, followed by safety training, hazard management, and safety communication. Demographic factors, including age, gender, and years of experience, had minimal impact, highlighting that the organizational environment and safety practices are more critical determinants of employee retention than individual characteristics.

In conclusion, fostering a positive OSH climate is essential for retaining skilled employees, reducing turnover, and ensuring operational stability in high-risk industries. Organizations that prioritize leadership engagement, provide continuous safety training, actively manage hazards, and maintain effective safety communication create an environment in which employees feel valued, secure, and committed to remaining with the organization. These findings emphasize that OSH is not only a regulatory obligation but a strategic investment in human capital retention.

Based on the findings, the study makes the following recommendations:

First, management should demonstrate visible commitment to workplace safety by participating in safety programs, allocating resources for safety initiatives, and recognizing employees who engage in safe practices. Leadership engagement signals the organization's priorities and motivates employees to adhere to safety protocols. Second, organizations should implement comprehensive and ongoing safety training programs tailored to the specific hazards and operational requirements of their industry. Training should be interactive, context-specific, and include refresher sessions to reinforce knowledge and safe practices. Third, hazard management strategies should be strengthened, including regular risk assessments, provision of appropriate personal protective equipment, and prompt corrective actions to address identified hazards. Fourth, safety communication should be enhanced through regular briefings, accessible written guidelines, and channels for employees to report hazards or provide feedback. Transparent communication fosters trust and ensures that employees understand safety expectations. Additionally, organizations should consider establishing employee safety committees or participatory platforms that involve staff in identifying risks and improving safety procedures. Such involvement promotes ownership, accountability, and engagement, further strengthening retention. Policymakers and regulatory agencies should support organizations by providing guidance, monitoring compliance, and offering capacity-building programs that encourage proactive safety management. Ultimately, investing in OSH practices is a strategic approach to improving employee retention, operational efficiency, and organizational resilience. By fostering a culture of safety, organizations in Ghana can not only protect their workforce from harm but also create a loyal and committed employee base, contributing to sustainable performance and competitiveness in high-risk industries.

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